

---

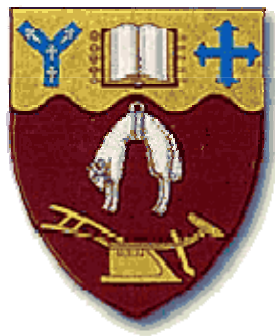
# Sex in Women's Magazine Advertising

An analysis of the degree of sexuality in women's magazine advertising across age demographics and women's responses.

---

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
in Mass Communication  
at the  
University of Canterbury

**Ilona P. Pawlowski, B.A. (Hons)**



University of Canterbury,  
Christchurch, New Zealand

2007

## **Abstract**

---

On opening women's magazine the reader is bombarded with page after page of advertisements featuring highly sexualised images of women.

This thesis explores the use of sexuality in contemporary women's magazine advertising and how women respond to this. A year-long analysis of twelve different monthly magazines, spanning three different age demographics was undertaken. A comprehensive coding schedule was developed, and over 5000 advertisements were analysed in a quantitative manner to determine the level of sexuality.

Nearly 500 women took part in an online survey. It was designed to gauge their responses to the use of sex in advertising, as well as the influence of advertising overall. This analysis found that sex is a tool used by advertisers in almost every advertisement that appears in women's magazines, particularly those targeted at the youngest age demographics. Some products, such as fragrances, rely more heavily on the use of sex in their advertising campaigns than others.

The women surveyed believed that average and older women are under-represented in advertising. Women tend to recollect advertisements that promote a 'promise' or an idealised lifestyle set in a sexual context. Recollection is, of course, the aim of advertising, so it would appear that the use of sex is here to stay.

## Acknowledgements

---

Biggest thanks to my supervisor, Jim Tully, for his unwavering support and belief in me, and my research. Most of all I would like to thank him for his guidance and patience in allowing me to come to my own conclusions, time and again, until I finally came to the right way of thinking (which also funnily enough was his way of thinking!). Also, for his open door policy even though he is the Head of School and has a million things on his mind other than women's magazines. Lastly, I would like to thank him for his kind words of poetic wisdom:

There was a girl called Ilona  
Who wished that her thesis was over  
She'd read lots of mags  
Consumed all their ads  
And all she could do was moan-a.

In academic speak  
She'd become a girl geek  
In love with the task of encoding  
To her friends' great dismay  
She'd code night and day  
Their confidence in her eroding

Special thanks go out to Pat Ydgren, Jim's PA and gate-keeper. Pat, thanks for letting me slip into his office time and again and above all else thanks for the little chats and always making me feel welcome.

I am grateful to the support provided by the School of Political Science and Communication particularly the fees scholarship that enabled me to undertake this study. Dr Mohammed Musa deserves an extra special thank you for guiding me in my undergraduate years and wisely dissuading me from undertaking postgraduate research in an area which I now see I would have regretted.

To my office buddies, Lorie, Paul and Ewok, thanks for sharing in the highs and lows and for all the crazy moments of the past 12 months.

I would like to thank all the people – particularly students from the University of Canterbury – for generously donating countless issues of magazines towards my research. Also, to the 491 online-survey volunteers, thank you for taking the time and providing your honest opinions. Without this generosity of strangers, this thesis would not exist.

On a more personal front, I would like to sincerely thank my family for their ongoing interest and pride in my achievements and for their unlimited support and unquestioningly allowing my academic deadlines to take precedence over everything else. Special thanks to Babcia (Grandma) for passing on her love of learning and study ethic.

Thank you to Philippa and Warren for their continuous support and always welcoming me with open arms into their peaceful haven which I now consider a second home. Thank you for always having the cupboards full, coffee brewing and words of much-needed reassurance at the ready.

Last, but of course not least, a special mention to my Benny. You (poor darling) have borne the brunt of my frustrations, whilst remaining undeniably supportive and caring. I cannot thank you enough; you have remained my pillar of strength throughout this thesis and have undertaken many roles to bring it to fruition – project manager, personal chef, best friend, and proof reader extraordinaire – the list goes on. In gratitude, I promise not to undertake any further postgraduate study...well at least not for the next five years anyway!

# Table of Contents

---

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Preamble	2
1.2	Women's Magazines	3
1.3	The Definition of 'Sex' in this Analysis	6
1.4	Thesis Structure	8
1.4.1	Literature Review	8
1.4.2	Part I - Demographic Analysis of Sexuality in Advertising	8
1.4.3	Part II - Womens' Responses	8
<b>2</b>	<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1	The Sexual History of Advertising	11
2.1.1	1850 – 1900	11
2.1.2	1900 – 1925	12
2.1.3	1925 – 1950	13
2.1.4	1950 – 1975	14
2.1.5	Contemporary Campaigns	15
2.2	Advertising's Ubiquitous Nature	16
2.3	Previous Studies	18
2.3.1	Erving Goffman	19
2.3.2	Longitudinal Studies	21
2.3.3	Specific Age Studies	25
2.3.4	'Real Beauty' Studies	27
2.3.5	Psychological and Impact Studies	30
2.4	Summary	32

<b>3</b>	<b>PART I – DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>35</b>
3.2.1	Demographics	35
3.2.2	Types of Advertisements	37
3.2.3	Sampling and Analysis	38
3.2.4	Source	39
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Coding Schedule</b>	<b>41</b>
3.3.1	Terms and Definitions of the Coding Schedule	41
3.3.2	Placement and Size of Advertisements	61
3.3.3	Product Category	61
3.3.4	Use of Celebrities	63
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Application of Coding Schedule</b>	<b>65</b>
3.4.1	Vivienne Westwood – Hardcore Diamonds	65
3.4.2	Freya Summer Sunshine	66
<b>3.5</b>	<b>Results, Analysis and Discussion</b>	<b>69</b>
3.5.1	Terminology	69
3.5.2	How many advertisements were analysed?	70
3.5.3	How many advertisements were analysed in each demographic?	70
3.5.4	Which demographic had the highest average sexuality score?	71
3.5.5	Overall, which title had the highest average sexuality score?	73
3.5.6	What are the ten most sexual advertisements?	74
3.5.7	Overall, which advertisements in the analysis were the least sexual?	80
3.5.8	Were there any advertisements that scored lower than expected?	83
3.5.9	Did a brand stand out as more sexual than others overall?	85
3.5.10	Do any advertisements appear across all four titles in more than one demographic?	88
3.5.11	Did the degree of sexuality vary according to the month or season?	92
3.5.12	Which product category is most sexual?	93
3.5.13	Case Studies	98
3.5.14	Summary of Results	104
<b>3.6</b>	<b>Limitations and Solutions</b>	<b>105</b>
3.6.1	The Coding Schedule	105
3.6.2	Content Analysis	110
3.6.3	Sampling	110
3.6.4	Demographics	111

<b>4</b>	<b>PART II – WOMENS’ RESPONSES</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>114</b>
4.2.1	Surveys	114
4.2.2	Survey Questions	116
4.2.3	Sampling for Question 14	119
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Results, Analysis and Discussion</b>	<b>121</b>
4.3.1	Terminology	121
4.3.2	Preliminary Questions	122
4.3.3	Product Purchasing Decisions	128
4.3.4	The Influence of Advertising	137
4.3.5	‘Average’ and ‘Old’?	141
4.3.6	Responses to use of Sex in Advertising	145
4.3.7	Ranking of Images	148
4.3.8	Summary of Rankings and Comments	154
4.3.9	Case Study – Old Age in Women’s Magazine Advertising	156
4.3.10	Summary of Results	161
<b>4.4</b>	<b>Understanding Interpretation of Advertising</b>	<b>163</b>
4.4.1	Types of Products	165
4.4.2	Types of Consumers	166
4.4.3	Summary	169
<b>4.5</b>	<b>Limitations and Solutions</b>	<b>170</b>
4.5.1	Surveys	170
4.5.2	Sampling	171
4.5.3	Advertisement Size	172
<b>5</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>177</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>184</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>191</b>
	Appendix A – Encoding Example	192
	Appendix B – Online Survey and Automated Responses	193

# 1 Introduction



## 1.1 Preamble

---

Never-ending legs. Deep, plunging cleavage. Slightly parted lips. Long, wavy hair. A come-hither expression...

The above characteristics describe a typical sexualised portrayal of a woman featured in contemporary women's magazine advertising. Some advertisers incorporate only one or two of the above characteristics, while others include exotic settings, teamed with male models to depict the ultimate sexual fantasy. 'Sexuality, sexual desire, sexual lust, and even intimations of sexual intercourse are fairly ubiquitous in contemporary advertising' (Berger 2004: 75).

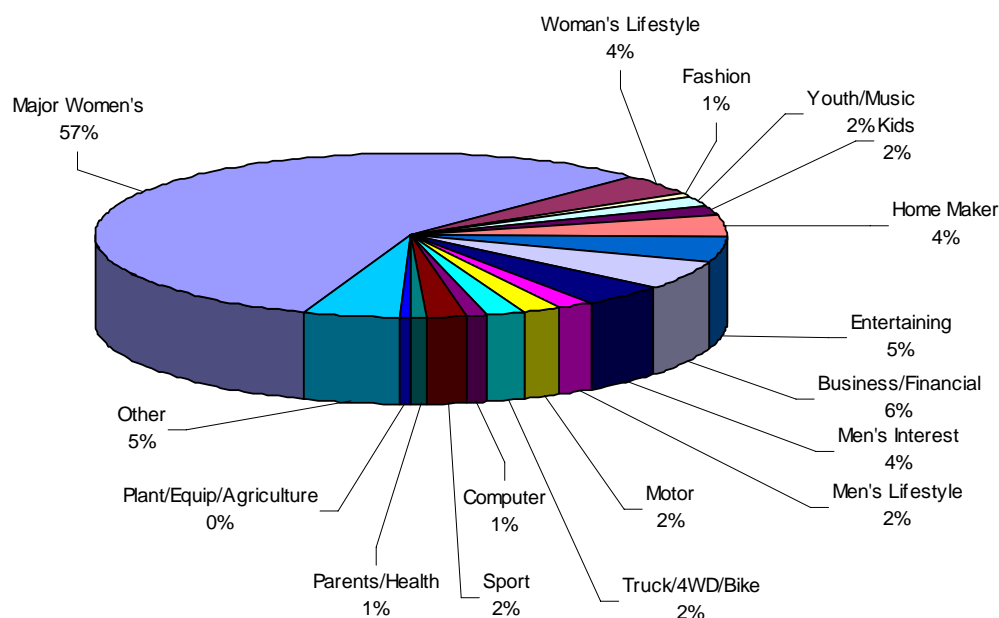
The notion of sex has long ago attracted advertisers - as far back as the 1800s (Reichert 2003) - as a tool in advertising to entice, shock and ultimately to convince consumers to purchase their products. This tactic has proved successful because it would seem that every other page in a women's magazine is an advertisement which features subtle to extreme degrees of sexuality. Historically, as advertising has developed so has the degree of sexuality.

Advertising has evolved over time and has become pivotal in not only promoting the consumerist society, but also using products to facilitate the exchange of meaning in today's capitalised world. This notion has been exemplified with the onset of 'branding' whereby products have intangible stigma, or meaning, attached to them to the extent that rather than buying a product on its face value, consumers are further compelled to purchase it in the belief that they are buying into a particular image or lifestyle. In this day and age, this image is becoming more and sexualised through the use of sex in women's magazine advertising.

This thesis explores the degree of sexuality used in contemporary women's magazine advertising across three age demographics, and how women respond to the use of sexuality in this medium.

## 1.2 Women's Magazines

Women's magazines are a powerful advertising medium since 'advertising occupies up to 95 per cent of the space in some women's magazines, earning these publications the more appropriate title, "women's advertising magazines"' (McCracken 1993: 4). Although this is not the case for all of the magazines used in this study; it certainly is an indication of the prevalence that advertising has in women's magazines. Moreover, according to an ABC Magazine Market Audit 62% of magazines in Australia and New Zealand are aimed at and read specifically by women ([www.acpmmedia.com.au](http://www.acpmmedia.com.au) 15/03/06). This comprises the major women's, women's lifestyle and fashion magazines as shown in Figure 1 below. In both Australia and New Zealand, women 'love magazines, a passion that's earned them the distinction of being amongst the world's biggest consumers of periodicals' (Tebbel 2000: 109). Moreover, in terms of sex in advertising within these magazines, according to Reichert, 'perhaps 90 percent of sexual content in advertising involves women' (2003: 11). This in itself warrants an investigation into the use of sex in advertising and its purpose and effectiveness, as well as the possible influences that advertising within magazines has on its readers and the responses they have towards it.



**Figure 1 - Magazine categories (ABC Audit December 2004 cited in [www.acpmmedia.com.au](http://www.acpmmedia.com.au) 15/03/06)**

The majority of advertising that is featured in these major women's magazines plants – and thrives off – seeds of insecurity and false materialistic needs into women's minds

through the construction of 'the good life' (Davidson 1992: 30); an enticing, ideological, mythic world filled with perfect, flawless people enjoying a bountiful array of products. However, in reality, "perfect", "flawless" and above all "ideal" are unattainable, hence, 'advertising doesn't mirror how people are acting but how they are dreaming' (Jhally 2000: 32).

Ironically, this unattainable dream world is exactly what attracts large numbers of women to these glossy magazines. The advertising featured offers them a form of 'fantasy and escapism' (Brierly 1995: 167) from their real lives, even if only for a short time. 'Women's magazines, are a sphere of activity that readers view as an area of freedom, free choice and free time' (McCracken 1993 72) and the advertising within creates new wants and needs. Needless to say, it is primarily due to this high readership that advertisers maintain such a stronghold over the women's magazine market and society. It seems that as the amount of advertng material increases, it is slowly transforming into the 'central storytelling mechanism of our society' (Jhally 2000: 30). Moreover, this is unlikely to change because advertising and all of its promises are virtually inescapable and the onslaught is unavoidable as 'the average person is exposed to around one and a half thousand advertisements' (Kilbourne 1995: 101) on a daily basis. This exposure is greatly increased through the consumption of women's magazines. This warrants an investigation into such a fast expanding, influential and easily accessible medium.

Brief descriptions of just three out of the 142 magazines that were analyzed highlight the 'individuality and personality of each magazine' ([www.acpmedia.com.au](http://www.acpmedia.com.au)) that was used in this study: *Cosmopolitan* aimed at young women; *Glamour* aimed at middle-age-range women; and *Next* aimed at older, more mature women. These magazines market themselves as far more than mere magazines. For example, *Cosmopolitan* personifies itself by acknowledging its own sexual tone, 'we don't just sell magazines, we sell desire and aspiration...speaking one voice – a voice that is worldly, adventurous and of course sexy'. The magazine further acknowledges the centrality and importance of the advertising, 'our readers don't flick through *Cosmopolitan* they devour it, advertisements and all' ([www.acp.com.au](http://www.acp.com.au)). *Glamour* Magazine boasts a 'unique combination of beauty and brains' with 'news-making coverage of beauty, fashion, health and relationships' ([www.condenastmediakit.com](http://www.condenastmediakit.com)). In contrast, *Next* describes its reader as 'smart, well travelled, and adventurous' ([www.acpmedia.co.nz](http://www.acpmedia.co.nz)) and simply describes the types of

articles featured. It can be deemed from these descriptions that these magazines are quite different, although this analysis will determine that the advertising techniques used within these magazines are quite similar, focusing on gender and sexuality as key marketing tools.

## 1.3 The Definition of ‘Sex’ in this Analysis

---

According to *The Oxford Combined Dictionary*, ‘sex’ is defined as ‘appeal, attractiveness due to difference of sex...sexy woman...equipped with sexual characteristics’ (1987: 269). ‘Sexy’ is defined as ‘sexually stimulating, attractive or provocative...’ and ‘sexual’ is ‘pertaining to relations between the sexes...sexual characteristics or activity’ (1987: 269). These three terms will be used interchangeably throughout this analysis when referring to how sex is used in women’s magazine advertising.

In this analysis the notion of ‘sex’, ‘sexy’ and ‘sexual’ covers an array of feminine characteristics commonly featured in advertising images in women’s magazines. For the most part, the ‘media’s standard of beauty’ (Tebbel 2000: 4) consists of thin and attractive, young models. Throughout this analysis these three characteristics, either alone or together are deemed as sexy in one form or other.

In magazines used in this analysis advertisers use the human form – particularly the female body – as a marketing tool for their products. ‘One of the most deeply seated traits of man, it is felt, is gender; femininity and masculinity are in a sense the prototypes of essential expression – something that can be conveyed fleetingly in any social situation and yet something that strikes at the most basic characteristics of the individual’ (Goffman 1997: 7). Advertising messages can be understood by the reader ‘fleetingly’ or at a glance because men and women are generally depicted in a manner stereotypically and traditionally appropriate to their gender; for example, women are constantly shown as being innocent yet sexy, placid and fragile, whilst men are portrayed to be the exact opposite. Moreover, ‘in modern advertising, gender is probably the social resource that is used most by advertisers. Thousands of images surround us every day of our lives that address us along gender lines. Advertising seems to be obsessed with gender and sexuality’ (Jhally 1990: 135).

This rather outdated portrayal of gender and expression of sexuality continues to be used in contemporary advertisements largely because it’s a successful formula that reaps financial reward. This will continue as long as women believe – even if only for a fleeting moment – that purchasing the advertised product will bring them one step closer to achieving the unachievable. As Jean Kilbourne points out: ‘those who are dissatisfied with their looks, their bodies, their status, make great consumers’ (cited in Lee 2003:

134). Furthermore, Nancy Etcoff sums it up well: ‘to tell people not to take pleasure in beauty is like telling them to stop enjoying food or sex or novelty or love’ (2000). This is an unrealistic possibility because to admire and to want is innate in human character. Advertisers are acutely aware of this as they create advertisements filled with portrayals of gorgeous, sexualised women.

## **1.4 Thesis Structure**

---

The thesis is divided into three main sections:

- A literature review explores previous studies
- In Part I the sexuality used in over 5000 advertisements is analysed
- In Part II the responses to sexuality in advertising of nearly 500 women are discussed

Parts I and II both contain their own separate methodologies appropriate for each section.

### **1.4.1 Literature Review**

A review of previous studies relevant to this analysis was undertaken. These studies highlight similar areas that have been researched and provide an insight and background for the context of this analysis. A brief historical outline demonstrates how sex has been used by advertisers in the past and points to how it may be used in the future. It sets the scene for the Part I of the analysis.

### **1.4.2 Part I - Demographic Analysis of Sexuality in Advertising**

Part I of this study analysed three demographically different sets of women's magazines and investigated the degree of sexuality in the advertising across these demographics – 18-24, 25-34 and 35-50 plus. Over 5000 individual advertisements were analysed and encoded to determine the degree of sexuality using a quantitative framework. Overall, Part I determines if the degree of sexuality varies between demographics or if it remains the same. It establishes if sex is used as a tool by advertisers, irrelevant of the products, across the three demographics.

### **1.4.3 Part II - Womens' Responses**

In Part II, women answered online surveys to establish the influence of magazine advertising has on them and their product purchases and their response to the use of sex in

advertising. The respondents were asked an array of questions based on advertising images analysed in Part I. Nearly 500 women completed the survey.



## **2 Literature Review**

## 2.1 The Sexual History of Advertising

---

The use of sex as a tool in advertising goes back to the 1800s when the advertising industry noted the advantageous effect of employing degrees of sexuality in their advertising campaigns. These advantages include – above all else - an increase in revenue due to the point of difference that sexual tactics provide for the product. At times, the use of sex also provides shock-value which often causes societal debate and aids in the campaign's long-term recollection. According to Tom Reichert, author of *The Erotic History of Advertising*;

‘Many real-life examples from the 1800s to the present exist to suggest that it has worked, and does work, to inflame not only consumers’ libidos but their motivations and desires to make purchases. In some cases, sex in advertising contributes to the building of strong, vibrant, and long-lasting brands’ (2003: 9).

This section explores the above statement based on Reichert's work. A brief chronological outline of a selection of campaigns and products is presented discussing the purpose and effectiveness of using sex in advertising.

### 2.1.1 1850 – 1900

The late 1800s marked the beginnings of the use of sex in advertising. Most notably, partially naked classical female forms were often seen on tobacco products. The growth of technology and printing and photography methods saw the rise and expansion of advertising techniques. ‘As advertising grew, so did the opportunity for the expression of sexual themes and sexual content’ (ibid: 48). This era further progressed to the beginnings of ‘branding’ products. Branding was used to differentiate similar products from each other, with the point of distinction often made through the use of sexualised images of women. Examples of some of the images from this era are shown on the following page.



(a)



(b)



(c)

During this period the cigarette industry began promoting its product to its predominantly male clientele through the use of highly sexualised images of women. Small cards featuring ‘photographs or lithographs of buxom young women in what must have seemed very daring, if not shocking, costumes’ (Reichert 2003: 51) were included within the cigarette packets as an incentive to purchase. During this time other products such as corsets, beverages, body lotions and even coal, used sex in advertising (image (c)). However, the degree of sexuality varied depending on whether the intended audience was male or female, as was seen with the advertising of cigarettes. There is little historical record of sex or sexuality being used as explicitly to promote products to women as is commonly seen today.

### **2.1.2 1900 – 1925**

The 1900s saw the creation and use of the ‘promise’ in advertising which is commonly used today. ‘It is a pitch that says, “You too can obtain love, intimacy, and all the wonderful accoutrements of a grand romance [or whatever it is you desire] if you simply buy and use our brand”’ (Reichert 2003: 69). This era saw the move away from basic informational advertisements to ‘a persuasion based orientation’ (ibid: 71). Persuasive promises were often used in hygiene, beauty and clothing products and appealed to women’s insecurities in order to better entice men. Moreover, this approach was conceived by women, for women, and was based on consumer research which was a new concept for advertising.

The year 1925 saw what is believed the first mainstream advertisement that showed the back of a woman's knee. 'Up until then, the back of the knee was said to be as taboo in advertising as pubic hair is today' (ibid: 84). Image (a) shows such an advertisement while images (b) and (c) are common advertisement from this time.



(a)



(b)



(c)

### 2.1.3 1925 – 1950

The promise of romance continued in this era and this type of advertisements dominated women's magazines. This period also saw the rise of motion picture stars –the first use of celebrities as we know them today – who were adored by women and were in turn posed in advertisements further advocating the idea of romance. Advertisements (b) and (c) below are examples of this.



(a)



(b)



(c)

In addition, in the 1930s ‘Woodbury’s’ Facial Soap was one of the first advertisers to feature nude female images in mainstream publications’ (ibid: 97). The image was portrayed in what was considered an artistic and tasteful manner with the nipples and pubic area always deftly hidden from view.

#### 2.1.4 1950 – 1975

According to Reichert, after World War II, ‘the general public was openly confronting, or confronted with, sexuality like never before...sexual images became more visible...during the quarter of the century...the intensity and frequency of innuendo and sexual meaning increased’ (2003: 134). The pill was introduced during this time, as was the publication of the Hugh Hefner’s *Playboy* magazine. In fashion, the mini-skirt was introduced.

Advertisements filled with sexual innuendo were becoming common place. Never before had sex been paired with unrelated products to such an extent. Examples of some of these images are shown below.



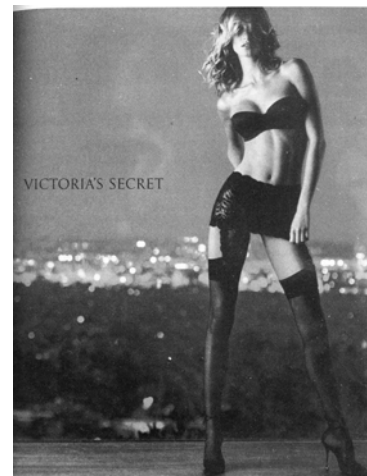
Interestingly, this period flaunted the use of sex in advertising and yet in the 1950s ‘respectable women didn’t colour their hair’ (ibid:159). Artificial changes of hair colour were looked down upon and only ‘fast-women... actresses, prostitutes and misguided women’ (ibid: 159-160) succumbed to colouring their tresses. This view soon changed with a successful advertising campaign, for Clairol, that practically revolutionised the idea of coloured hair.

### 2.1.5 Contemporary Campaigns

The continuous use of sex in advertising from the 1800s until today is testament that it is a tool that works for advertisers. Certainly, the technological techniques available to advertisers today are far greater than in the past, and nipples peep through from time to time in advertising copy. However, the fundamentals of using sex in advertising that were laid down long-ago are still used today.

This literature review will not address the use of sex in specific contemporary campaigns because this entire study concentrates on advertisements from 2005 and 2006. Reichert identified some campaigns that stood out more than others in terms of their sexuality. These are Victoria's Secret lingerie, Wonder-bra intimates, Calvin Klein underwear, jeans and fragrances, and Guess jeans and clothing to name but a few. With the exception of Victoria's Secret these are all addressed in upcoming chapters.

Below are some of the more risqué advertisements that were encountered in Reichert's work.



## 2.2 Advertising's Ubiquitous Nature

---

Advertising can be viewed as a persuasive and powerful form of communication that uses 'sexploitation of the female body' (Berger 2004: 75) as one of its key communication tools, especially when viewed within the context of women's magazines. Many of the advertisements featured within these magazines can be deemed as a manifestation of false materialistic needs that ultimately work to continue the seemingly never-ending cycle of consumption of sexualized goods. The 'advertising media have the motivation (profit), the means (media exposure), and the mechanism (use of language and photos)' to promote and perpetuate ideal standards of beauty (Wilson 1995: 31) which are often packaged in a sexual manner. Often, these beauty ideals are unrealistic, thus attainable by 'real' women and have clearly been put in place to feed dominant ideologies that perpetuate commercial interests. Thus, it seems that whatever a woman's aim, desire, need or fear, the array of products advertised throughout the publications, often seamlessly interwoven with the editorial content, promise a solution for all tastes, problems and dreams.

'Advertising associates a brand or product with a prestigious or romanticised lifestyle, and suggests that the use of the product will transform the consumer into a more beautiful, more desirable or more energetic human being. The consumer, believing or half-believing this, and consciously or subconsciously coaxed by the ad's suggestion, buys the product (Phillips 1997: 109)

It would be difficult if not impossible to dismiss or even ignore the persuasive nature of advertising in its entirety. According to Sut Jhally, 'to deny completely the messages of advertising is to deny our definitions of ourselves as socially recognizable individuals in this culture' (1990: 137). Thus, advertising does not simply persuade individuals to purchase products; it teaches them about their role in society, specifically in regards to gender and sex. Advertising relies heavily upon conventionalized portrayals of gender (ibid: 134). It is assumed that people are generally accepting of advertising images because they are a mere – although somewhat twisted – representation of their own gendered social reality.

According to sociologist Erving Goffman, a pioneer in this field of research, 'advertisers conventionalise our conventions, stylise what is already stylisation, make use of what is already something considerably cut off from contextual controls' (Goffman 1979: 84). Thus, advertising plays a crucial factor in forming perceptions of gender and shaping ideas of what it means to be male or female in our society.



## 2.3 Previous Studies

---

Numerous studies (such as Goffman, Linder, Reichert and Carpenter described in detail below) have been undertaken into the area of gender representation in advertising – specifically the way women are sexually represented in contrast to men. However, it would appear that comparative studies, specifically comparing the degree of sexuality featured in advertisements across demographically diverse women's magazines and women's responses' to this is so far an area that has hardly been explored. This relatively new area of study is important for many reasons: is the advertising featured across demographically diverse women's appropriate for the age demographic of the readerships? How is the notion of sex is applied to the promotion of products? What is the response of women across the three age demographics to these questions?

This area of research has not been completely overlooked. In regards to age demographics, previous studies (such as Gorman and Coupland discussed below) have focused on one specific age group – predominantly teenagers – and analysed the impacts of advertising featured. Coupland focused on the marginalisation of old age in the media overall, while others have analysed the representation of seemingly 'average' women in advertisements and gauged responses to this phenomenon. The point here is that this research has not been specifically compared with other age demographics in the same study. Instead, studies have focused on the effects of advertising upon women and society while looking at one demographic. A comparative study of women's magazine demographics focusing on varying degrees of sexuality would generate new results, especially if it considered how sex was used in regards to women's bodies and if this was depicted in a positive or negative light. These types of questions could provide new insights into how effectively and with what purpose sex is used in advertising. It may also provide greater understanding of gender roles within society.

Past research has often focused on longitudinal studies to establish if the degree of sexuality has increased or decreased between periods of time. Different genres of magazines have also been a point of interest in previous studies – determining if the gender representation and degree of sexuality vary in a general interest magazine when compared with a magazine aimed specifically at women. In this regard, men's and

women's magazines have also been studied and compared to establish how different genders are represented in advertising.

This section of the thesis explores such previous studies. Each of these is invaluable and provides a sound foundation for new studies such as this one. Some are elaborated on more than others. This is a reflection of the importance that the study has to this specific analysis, while a few of the previous studies outlined below offer an interesting insight and background information into the subject area as a whole.

### **2.3.1 Erving Goffman**

A previously mentioned, Erving Goffman's work is a cornerstone in this field of research and has been used as a basis and point of reference by numerous social science researchers and authors. In his book *Gender Advertisements*, Goffman (1979) provides a technique, referred to as frame analysis, which allows for stereotypical gendered postures and positions to be coded accordingly. This coding schedule consists of five coding categories which are listed below.





- Relative size
- Function ranking
- Feminine touch
- Ritualisation of subordination
- Licensed withdrawal

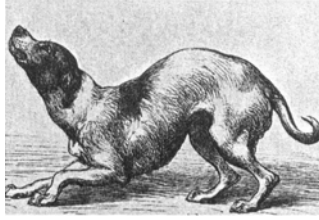
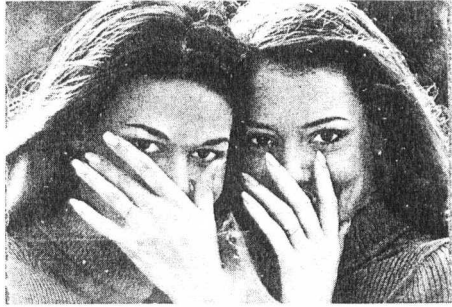

These categories concentrate on and are largely determined by how the models are featured in regards to their facial expressions, positions and placing, finger sucking and biting, knee bends, as well as eyes and hands. These indicators are important because Goffman emphasised that gender roles in advertisements often rely on very subtle stereotypical portrayals of feminine and masculine traits that are accepted in society as the norm through the repetitive nature of advertising. Moreover, the men and women depicted in advertising are often subconsciously perceived by society as representing the entire population, thus further validating stereotyped gender roles. Goffman provides many examples of magazine advertisements that show women posed in a stereotypical manner, in line with his categories. These examples are beneficial for researchers who

are referring to Goffman's categories in their own research, for they provide an explanation in the form of a visual image, alongside the written explanation, which when coupled together, provides a clear understanding of the categories. This allows for a relatively solid coding schedule which could be perceived as just as important as the research itself, since a flawed coding schedule may produce skewed results.

Goffman's five coding categories are summarised below in Table 1. It must be noted that these are Goffman's categories which were considered appropriate in 1979.

**Table 1 - Goffman's five coding categories**

Category	Description	Example images
<b>Relative Size</b>	The female usually appears smaller than the male, yielding power to the masculine figure.	
<b>Feminine Touch</b>	The female touch is light and caressing bringing attention to the object being advertised, or to parts of her body, conveying a sense of delicacy.	
<b>Function Ranking</b>	Women are pictured as deferring to men in occupational roles.	
<b>Reutilisation of Subordination</b>	<p>This falls into three main categories:</p> <p>Lowered body: The female is depicted physically below either the male or the viewer.</p> <p>Lowered head and body cant: Acts of subordination and submissiveness.</p>	

Category	Description	Example images
	Goffman used the image of a dog looking up at its master to illustrate the subordination of the body cant.	
<b>Licensed withdrawal</b>	<p>Women are pictured as being fearful, shy and submissive to others, such as hiding behind their hands, as if seeking protection.</p> <p>This shows women as being emotionally disconnected from the scene and therefore not intellectually involved.</p>	 

Many of these stereotypical representations of gender are still used in contemporary advertising today, just as they were in 1979. This highlights the importance of Goffman's work as it continues to be used by modern-day researchers, such as Linder (2004) and Kang (1997) to name but a few.

### 2.3.2 Longitudinal Studies

In 2004, Katharina Linder, completed a study that was based on Goffman's five coding categories, coding a total of 1,374 advertisements. It focused on the portrayal of women in general interest magazines, from 1955 to 2002. Overall, the study found that 78 per cent of all advertisements contained stereotypical images of women in at least one of the categories. This high result signified that very few changes were found in images portraying women between 1955 and 2002. Linder concluded that this was a surprising result considering the real life changes women have undergone since 1955, both in the home and in the workforce. Clearly, these changes have not been reflected in advertising and stereotypical representations of women were found to be considerably higher in

*Vogue* magazine than in *Time*. Although this result was anticipated since *Vogue* is a fashion magazine thus;

‘these sexualized images are a primary way of portraying women ... this portrayal of women as inferior and “flawed” is a necessity for the existence of a women’s fashion magazines such as *Vogue*, which is primarily a means for advertising and selling products that are suggested to be a “cure” for women’s feelings of inferiority and inappropriateness’ (Linder 2004:419-420)

This explains why women’s fashion magazines continue to portray their models in the same manner throughout time. Creating an inferiority complex seems to be a successful marketing tool that works for advertisers even though it makes women feel inappropriate and insecure. Advertisements are often filled with ‘promises’ to cure these insecurities. Linder concludes that more studies need to be undertaken; however there is a strong suggestion that exposure to repetitive gender roles in today’s media saturated environment may influence people’s attitudes and behaviours. Linder’s study highlights the need for further studies in the area of women’s general interest and fashion magazine advertising and the influence and effects this may have on women both physically and psychologically throughout their lifetime.

It is interesting to note that some studies found the degree of sexuality actually increased over time. Reichert and Carpenter (2004) conducted an extension of a study that assessed the degree of sex in 1983 and 1993. Magazine advertisements were content analyzed from 2003 and contrasted with the previous years. This study did not refer to Goffman’s coding analysis but the researchers’ own, and focused on genres of magazines. The overall results indicated that women not only continued to be portrayed in a sexual manner, but that the degree of sexuality increased over time. For example, ‘advertising became significantly more explicit from 1983 to 2003’ and clothing (or lack of as the case may be) largely contributed to this. For example, the results reveal that in 1983 only 28 per cent of female models wore sexually explicit clothes. This rose by 75 per cent in 2003 when 49 per cent of models were dressed in sexual attire. Thus in 2003 nearly half of the models featured were shown with less rather than more clothing: to be exact ‘in 2003 almost 4 out of 5 women who appeared in ads were suggestively dressed, partially clad, or nude’ (Reichert and Carpenter (2004)). Moreover, the images of women that were most sexually explicit were featured in men’s magazines. As Linder (2004) found,

general interest magazines, such as *Time* contained the least degree of sexualized images, when compared with magazines aimed predominantly at men and women.

The increase of sexuality over time could be linked to the similarity of products that are available today. It is assumed that in 1983 there was not such a vast array of products available on the market, and thus did not need to be differentiated from each other to such a large extent. Also, in 1983, advertisers were limited by the ability of computer graphic technologies. This is certainly not the case today and advertisers often resort to provocative images to differentiate between similar products. Notably, according to Reichert and Carpenter, specific products are marketed in a more sexual manner due to the nature of the product, such as fragrance and clothing (although clothing is also often used as a means to sexualize other products). It would be interesting to see if the products advertised vary across the publications' target demographics or if they remain the same.

Kang (1997) conducted a study focusing on gender behaviour patterns in advertising and determining which behaviours had been the most prevalent in magazine advertisements in 1979 and 1991. This study was a 'conceptual replication' of Erving Goffman's earlier 1979 study and utilized his five coding categories (outlined in Linder (2004).) Two additional coding categories were added – 'body display and independence/self assertiveness'. For this study, 252 random magazine advertisements were analysed from 1979 and 1991. Kang noted that previous studies – Sullivan & O'Connor (1988) and Kilbourne (1986) – had shown that the portrayal of women in advertising had often been stereotypical and thus this was an area in need for further analysis and research. 'Advertisements have consistently confined women to traditional mother – home -, or beauty/sex-oriented roles that are not representative of women's diversity' (Kang 1997).

This notion is further highlighted in Courtney and Lockeretz's (1979) study of images of women in advertisements whose findings were summarized by Kang as:

- Women were rarely shown in out-of-home working roles.
- Not many women were shown as a professional or high level business person.
- Women rarely ventured far from home by themselves or with other women.
- Women were shown as dependant on men's protection.
- Men were shown regarding women as sex objects or as domestic adjuncts.

- Females were most often shown in ads for cleaning products, food products, beauty products, drugs, clothing, fragrance, and home appliances.

These stereotypical categories are still prevalent in advertising featuring women in contemporary society. This is especially the case with regards to the last category where women are often shown in advertisements for beauty products, clothing and fragrance.

However, Kang predicted that stereotypical displays of gender would be less prominent in 1991 to those from 1979, largely due to women's changing role in society. The findings from the study indicate that, overall, the degree of sexuality in magazine advertising 'remained approximately the same' from 1979 to 1991. Even 'twelve years after the Goffman study, magazine advertisements are still showing the same stereotyped images of women' (Kang 1997) and advertising for cosmetics continues to be represented in a very sexual manner. The overall findings of this study were deconstructed into 17 variables to determine where the degree of sexuality was the most/least prominent. Through this variable analysis it was observed that two of Goffman's categories – relative size and function ranking – appeared so seldom in the contemporary advertisements that they could be viewed as no longer applicable to current and future studies.

From Kang's results, it is interesting to note that stereotyped images of women 'remained approximately the same' over a 20-year period despite major political and social changes during this time. Thus, women are represented in a way that assists the advertiser's financial imperatives but does not necessarily portray women as they actually are in reality. Clearly, these studies have shown that this trend has continued from generation to generation, and the importance of physical attractiveness for women has been passed down from mother to daughter. According to Freedman;

“...women are defined as much by their looks as by their deeds. To be womanly is to be beautiful, and conversely, to be unattractive is to be unwomanly...” (1986: 1 cited in Wilson 1995).

### 2.3.3 Specific Age Studies

Another study based on Goffman's frame analysis was that of Frances E. Gorman (2004) who conducted an age-specific study looking at the portrayals of females in Seventeen magazine, in positions of power and powerlessness. The study was conducted through a semiotic analysis of 12 issues of Seventeen Magazine over a one-year period and a 'total of 331 ads were analyzed' (2004). The researcher chose the magazine because it has a high teenage readership; 'one in every two American female teens reads' it, while the age demographic was chosen because it is believed that teenagers are the most susceptible to the influence of advertising images. As summarized by Berger;

'the momentous changes that occur during the teen years – growth spurt, sexual awakening, less personal schools, more intimate friendships and risk taking – all challenge the adolescent to find his or her identity, or unique and consistent self-definition' (1980: 501).

The analysis was partially based on Goffman's five categories which were further cast into two types of classifications; the signified and signifiers, and the signs/myths. The results identified that female teenagers are represented as sexual objects, most notably 56 per cent were displayed subordinately, while only 22 per cent of females were depicted independently. Gorman (2004) sums up the current state of teen magazine advertising;

'teens are consuming the same messages as their mothers, with a variety of new trends mixed in, which serve as nothing more than updated versions of the same gender-stereotyped myths of femininity'

However, studies indicate that this idealised stance of beauty does not change as women age, and the representation of older women in the media is not kinder or more realistic than that of the teen demographic. Coupland's 2003 study shows how the prospect of aging is approached in the world of advertising – a problematic area that needs to be disguised with the purchase of products. 'Advertisements formulate the ageing process, for women at least, as some sort of correctable aberration' (ibid: 129) through the consumption of products, as shown on the following page.



**‘Time is on your side’**

You’re approaching the end of  
your 20s – and that’s great! You’re  
at your gorgeous, glowing best...  
Approaching your 30s  
Is a scary time for a woman, when it  
comes to beauty. Everywhere you look  
there are images of gorgeous young  
women in their 20’s looking vibrant,  
lovely, and quite frankly, irresistible to  
men. Even though you know that there  
are plenty of sexy, gorgeous female  
role models in their 30s, think of Nicole  
Kidman and Sandra Bullock, and even  
older, like Goldie Hawn. It’s hard not to  
feel that somehow, something has  
packed up shop and gone, never to  
come back. It’s true that your skin will  
never again be wrinkle-free or have  
that same flush of youth, and you’re  
probably having to work harder to feel  
fit, healthy and glowing.....’

This excerpt is part of an advertisement for age-defying crèmes and potions from a women’s magazine. It was used in Coupland’s 2003 study, *Ageist Ideology and Discourses of Control in Skincare Product Marketing*. From the text above Coupland found ‘perhaps the most striking aspect...is the young age at which this text constructs visible ageing as problematic’ (ibid: 131) and texts examined such as this ‘work to equate beauty and desirability with youthful-looking (smooth, firm, wrinkle and blemish free) skin on face and body’ (ibid: 140). Perhaps studies such as Coupland’s help to explain why so few older women are featured in women’s magazine advertising. The results identified that older women are represented as less sexual than their younger counterparts. According to the text in the advertisement above, older is acquainted with approaching thirty where apparently the first signs of ageing begin. This rhetoric explains why actual older women – in their 40s, 50s and 60s – are featured infrequently in advertising.

Coupland conducted a survey of product advertisements and features across 12 popular women's magazine titles aimed at a range of readership demographics. Five of these are used in this analysis – *Cosmopolitan*, *Marie Claire*, *New Women*, *She* and *Vogue*. It will be interesting to see if Coupland's findings are reflected in this thesis.

Both of the above studies highlight that age – whether young or old – is unfairly represented in advertising. On the one hand, teens and young women are overly sexually represented, while on the other hand, older women (not even old-aged) appear to be marginalised to such an extreme that their feminine sexuality is lost. This study attempted to determine if Gorman's and Coupland's findings still ring true today.

Another study (Chen et al. 1997) conducted a content analysis of the portrayals of both men and women in Canadian magazine advertising. The analysis found that 'the younger age group (18-49) characters were over-represented...and the older age group (50 and over) were under-represented' (ibid: 6). Most importantly, with regards to this research and the discussion above regarding portrayals of much older women in advertising, the Canadian study found that 'there was no character of either gender identified to be 65 years of age or older at all in the advertisement' (ibid: 6).

Studies like these of Chen and Coupland indicate that the portrayal of age and ageing is important due to the marginalisation of older women that is evident in the area of advertising. In this research it will be interesting to note how many advertisements portray older women or if it will be a reflection of previous studies.

A case study on 'age' is included in Part II of the analysis.

### **2.3.4 'Real Beauty' Studies**

The views discussed above have been normalised by society. Idealised portrayals of females do not only exist in magazines aimed at teenagers, but are also aimed at women across a broad age demographic. Hence, the media landscape is saturated with advertising images of sexualized and passive females. In light of this comparative age demographic analysis is needed in this area. Teenagers are perhaps the most easily influenced age segment and older women have been marginalised in contemporary advertising. One would expect that alternative, more natural and realistic representations of women of all

ages would have been made available to society as women's roles progressed and changed throughout time. Recently, a few such campaigns have been run in women's magazines.

The Dove 'Campaign for Real Beauty' sought to 'broaden narrow definitions of beauty; challenge stereotypes; celebrate the diverse, the healthy, the real, the truly beautiful' (Dove 2006 cited in Patterson 2006). This was done through an advertising campaign that was novel in that it rejected stereotypical depictions of women, deviating from the norms of traditional beauty advertising. Instead, the campaign promoted more 'average' representations – women of all ages, shapes, sizes and ethnicities. In doing so the Dove campaign moved away from traditional methods of beauty advertising in that it 'undermines the basic proposition of decades of beauty-care advertising' (Neff 2004: 2). Consumers were presented with an array of images of 'average' women with rhetorical questions printed alongside them – such as 'wrinkled or wonderful?' and 'freckled or flawless?'. Of course, in traditional beauty discourse both of the above mentioned physical attributes – wrinkled and freckled – are considered as unattractive and in need of repair (or concealment) through the array of advertising products on offer. Examples of Dove advertisements are shown below.



Patterson (2006) analysed the campaign and the impression it had upon a target group of 100 female respondents. This part of the analysis – gauging women's responses to the campaign – is very similar to Part II of this analysis where 492 online survey respondents' perceptions were also gauged in similar areas.

Overall, Patterson's results indicated that the majority of the respondents viewed the Dove campaign positively. However, it was found that 'the target market may not wish to buy the brand because they imagine the products may make them look average' (ibid: 11)

and similar to the women shown in the advertising. Furthermore, one consumer even found the advertisements offensive, stating ‘the only time I want to see a thigh that big is in a bucket with bread crumbs in it’ (Schrobsdorff in Patterson 2006: 11). This response (although limited) is the reverse of the purpose and aim of advertising – it is supposed to attract and not repel its target market. In essence, the job of advertising per se is through the creation of wants and needs that would otherwise not exist. The results indicated that 89 percent of respondents were aware of the Dove campaign. The greatest awareness emerged in the youngest target demographic, 16-24 year olds, and the least aware were the 45-54 year olds.

In addition, respondents were asked to answer a series of rhetorical questions placed beside the women in the advertisements. For example, for one of the images – ‘wrinkled or wonderful?’ – 40 percent of respondents considered the woman in image (b) above to be neither beautiful nor ugly but average looking, while 33 percent believed her to be either ‘good looking’ or ‘very beautiful’. This can be considered as a relatively good result for older women whose representation is marginalized in the media, especially in the sphere of advertising in women’s magazines. However, in Patterson’s study ‘this model received the lowest beauty rating overall’ (ibid: 30) when compared with the other images analysed. A case study dedicated to the portrayal of older women in advertising and in the media is included in Part II of this analysis, in section 4.3.9.

These findings reveal that women themselves have different ideals of what it means to be beautiful – sexy, fat, grey-haired, freckled and so forth can all be perceived as beautiful by different women. These perceptions are largely founded on societal factors. According to Patterson;

‘The prevalent concern with beauty among women may be viewed a consequence of a number of forces acting concurrently. Namely, it can be understood as a means to exert social control over women, and as a means of patriarchal domination and as a consequence of nature and evolution. Culturally and economically, it acts an outward expression of a woman’s consumption ability and a way to express identity and the female self. Each perspective is complementary and considers beauty as a complete system that encompasses a range of disciplines: science, philosophy, anthropology, psychology, sociology, and economics’ (2006: 19).

Overall, these results, and campaigns such as Dove point towards a slight change in advertisers' approaches towards the promotion of beauty. This could be the start of a historical trend in advertising, although more likely it will be a 'fad' that will pass with time. This is often seen in the world of fashion where more normalised models are used for a short period to time and then discarded for thin 'skeletal' types that are considered to be the norm by designers at large. However, Patterson found that 66 percent of respondents believed that the Dove 'campaign for real beauty' signified a change in advertising, while 73 percent indicated that they would like to see more 'average' looking models – like those used in the Dove campaign – to appear in more advertising campaigns. Only time will tell if this more natural type of advertising is a fad or a profitable path for advertisers to continue. 'To date, no further use of this type of advertising has been utilized by companies' (ibid: 50) and it will be interesting to see if this approach is adopted by others.

### **2.3.5 Psychological and Impact Studies**

Wilson (1995) focused on the effects women's magazines have on women, specifically with regard to body satisfaction. This study largely drew on psychological theorists and methodologies. The results indicate that women in 1995 were concerned about their appearance and generally tended to be far more dissatisfied with their bodies than men. Wilson noted that 'attractiveness is a prerequisite for femininity but incidental to masculinity' (1995: 19) which tends to explain the abovementioned result. Moreover, Wilson drew on a study by Rodin, Silberstein, and Stiegel-Moore (1984) who used the term 'normative discontent' (p.267) to explain the way in which 'women's concern with weight and body image has reached such proportions that it can be seen as a normal part of female experience' (1995: 5) This should not be the case in contemporary society. All of these aspects are important to women. The study will explore some of these above mentioned issues in upcoming sections.

Another study from within the field of evolutionary psychology (Saad 2004) examined the portrayal of young and sexualised women in advertising images from a Darwinian perspective. Its view point is in direct contrast to feminist ideals. 'Contrary to the mantra chanted by some staunch feminists, advertisers are not involved in a patriarchal white-male-dominated conspiracy to derogate , exploit, subjugate, and dominate women'

(ibid: 1). Saad's study advocates the portrayal of young and sexualised women in advertising images under the premise that in certain circumstances this is the most effective formula for advertisers in reaching specific target groups. It referred to other studies such as Baker and Churchill (1977) which discussed the advantageous effects of using physically attractive models in advertising.

Secondly, Saad argued from a Darwinian standpoint that;

'Men and women have evolved mate preferences that make adaptive sense. Mating with unattractive elderly women or with moronic, submissive, and lazy men are behaviour that, evolutionarily speaking, constitute genetic suicide. Thus, the greater incidence, in which women are depicted as young and attractive, is merely a reflection of the fact that advertisers are aware of this blatant reality' (Saad 2004: 9).

This point of view, the 'blatant reality' as such, does not seem to account for the different mediums and genres in which advertisements are displayed and the gender at which they are aimed at. Reichert sums this up as 'show and sell';

'Depending on the audience, show and sell serves two purposes. If women are the target, skin is shown to reveal the brand's beauty-enhancing benefits. If ads are targeted at men, skin serves to titillate and arouse sexual interest, and to associate those responses with the brand. In advertising, the sexual show is designed – one way or other – to sell' (2003: 97).

In essence, sex should be used in advertising, although the way sex is used is dependent on the intended audience.

Saad's study was predominantly aimed at applying evolutionary psychology in understanding the representation of women in advertisements. However, it would have been interesting to see the differences if the approach had been applied to the representation of men.

## 2.4 Summary

---

The number of previous studies in this area indicates that it is an area worthy of further research especially because advertising works as an ideological tool within society. Building on these studies – Linder (2004), Kang (2005), Gorman (2004), Reichert and Carpenter (2004), Patterson (2006), Coupland (2003) and Wilson (1995) – this research will endeavour to highlight the importance of further age demographic comparative analysis. This will be done with regard to the sexual representation of the female body in women's magazine advertising – specifically to determine how the notion of sex is applied to advertising. These answers will be reached via a comparative demographic advertising analysis as well as from survey responses.

Studies cannot be viewed in a vacuum and need to be examined comparatively so as to gain a greater understanding of society as a whole, especially when regarding the influence of advertising on gender roles through the use of sex in advertising.

### **3 Part I – Demographic Analysis of Sexuality In Advertising**



### 3.1 Introduction

---

This first part of the research quantitatively analysed the degree of sexuality in women's magazine advertising across three different age demographics. A primarily quantitative content analysis research method was employed throughout the study to ensure quantifiable analysis, discussion and results. However, considering that this is a difficult subject to quantify, a qualitative aspect is also prevalent throughout.

Twelve women's magazine titles each spanning a 12-month period and three different age demographics were chosen for this study. The titles were: *Cosmopolitan*, *Cleo*, *Harpers Bazaar* and *She* predominately aimed at young women; *New Woman*, *Vogue*, *Marie Claire* and *Glamour* aimed at slightly older (the middle-age-range) women; and *O The Oprah Magazine*, *Next*, *Vanity Fair* and *The Australian Women's Weekly* aimed at mature women.

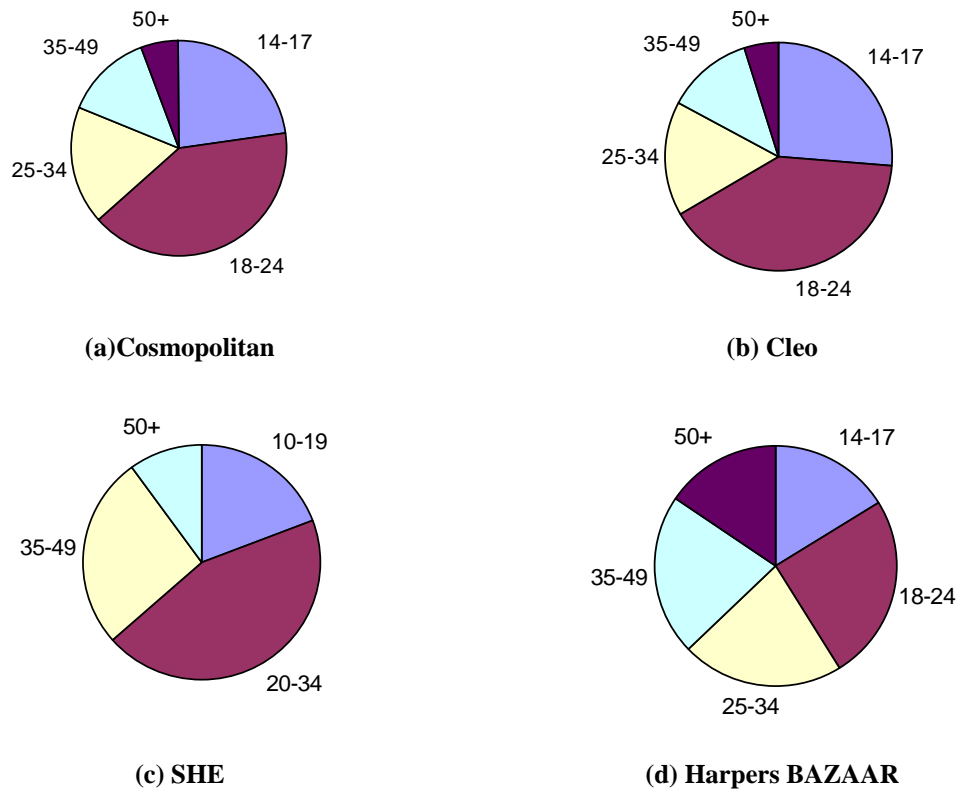
## 3.2 Methodology

---

### 3.2.1 Demographics

Prior to engaging in this analysis it was pre-determined that the majority of the magazines' readerships are in fact women and are targeted at the desired age demographic. This information was obtained from the publishers - ACP Media, Conde Nast Media Group, Hearst Corporation, Hearst/ACP Media, FPC Magazines, EMAP Publications and Pacific Magazines - for all twelve magazines. This information confirms that twelve different magazine titles aimed specifically at women in three distinct age demographics were analysed. The age demographics were categorised into the following breakdowns: 18-24, 25-34 and 35 plus. This is referred to as 'demographic segmentation – the practice of appealing to audiences defined by varying personal and social characteristics such as...gender and age' (Baran 1999: 306). These two areas are central while looking at the advertisements featured across the magazines and whether the advertising appears appropriate to the age demographic.

Figure 2 on the following page shows the published readership demographics for the magazines in the young 20s category. It can be seen that all these magazines have a readership predominantly in the late teens and early twenties. Note that *She* magazine does not show a definitive 18-24 age breakdown but is still widely considered as a magazine for women in their early twenties.



**Figure 2 - Published readership demographics - Young 20's magazines (Source: Publishers)**

For magazines in the older age groups, publishers have provided less distinct demographic breakdowns of the readership. However, median ages have been provided. Table 2 shows the median ages of the readership for magazines in the mid-range category, which are in the late twenties or early thirties.

**Table 2 -Published readership demographics – Mid-range (Source: Publishers)**

Title	Median Age of Readership
New Woman	27.5
Vogue	31
Glamour	33.9
Marie Claire	31.4

The median age of the readership of magazines in the mature category are shown in Table 3. It can be seen that these titles are read by women in their mid to late-thirties or older. The demographic breakdown of this age group does not rise above 45 years. However, in

spite of this, the analysis looks at women aged between 35 to 55 plus because it is assumed that women aged between 45 to 55 plus also consume these types of magazines even if they are not the target audience of the publisher. The survey analysis and discussion validates these points - refer to Part 2 of this analysis.

**Table 3 -Published readership demographics – Mature** (Source: Publishers)

<b>Title</b>	<b>Median Age of Readership</b>
Vanity Fair	40.4
Oprah Magazine	43.3
Australian Women's Weekly	>35
Next	>35

Note that a median age was not given for Next magazine. However, the demographic breakdown shows that 67% of the readership is aged over 35. Therefore, the median age is likely to be above this, similarly with *The Australian Women's Weekly*.

### **3.2.2 Types of Advertisements**

The analysis focused on full-page purchased advertisements because they 'make up between 50 and 60 per cent of most women's magazines' (McCracken 1993: 40), a substantial part of any publication. Due the large size of such advertisements the details are clearer and therefore easier to correctly analyse. In contrast, covert advertisements – 'the promotions of products, disguised as editorial material or hidden in some form or other so that they appear to be non-advertising material' (ibid: 4) – were not analysed. In this regard, only distinctive advertisements that were easily recognised as such by the researcher were included in this analysis. Therefore, any advertisements that exceeded four pages in length were not analysed because of their similarity to fashion spreads, while half and quarter-page advertisements were not analysed because they were not deemed substantially large enough to accurately observe the features during analysis.

Only gender advertisements that featured women/or women and men were analysed. Numerous advertisements were not included because they contained certain features that made them inappropriate for this research. For example, advertisements that portrayed

only men or children; women with children; or obviously pregnant women were excluded from the analysis, as was advertising for awareness campaigns, although some fundraising advertisements were included. Below are examples of the above-mentioned advertisements that were not analysed.



In addition, cartoons depicting women were discounted because they are not a realistic representation of the female body. The cover of the magazines were also not analysed, nor were any advertising booklets enclosed within the magazine because they are not considered to be part of the original magazine.

These rigid restrictions and clear guidelines ensured that advertising directly targeted at and featuring women remained the focus of this analysis.

### 3.2.3 Sampling and Analysis

Non-random sampling was undertaken – also referred to as ‘judgmental’ or ‘purposive’ sampling (Deacon et al. 1998: 50). This allowed for reasonable continuity throughout the research. The research sample consisted of 141 issues of magazines, four issues from each of the three demographics, over a twelve-month period. Because advertising style and varying degrees of sexuality can largely be dictated by fashion, it was important that the issues used were from as consistent a twelve-month period as possible, to avoid any changes in fashion causing changes in the sexuality within the advertisements.

The majority of the sample (110 issues) commenced in January 2005 and ended in December 2005. However, the remainder (31 issues) could not be accounted for from that time-frame so 2006 issues were used to supplement the missing 2005 issues. For example, the May 2005 issue of *She Magazine* could not be accounted for so the May

2006 issue has been used in its place. Overall, 141 out of the intended 144 magazine issues were located. This sample is largely representative of a twelve-month period and presents an encompassing range of advertisements which allowed for analysis of the same magazine sample across the demographics in terms of month and season.

After the sampling of magazines was completed the research proceeded with a content analysis of the advertisements. This form of research method 'aims at quantitative classification of a given body of content, in terms of a system of categories devised to yield data relevant to specific hypotheses concerning that content' (Berelson 1952: 202). However, it should be noted that a predominantly qualitative subject matter was applied to this quantitative framework.

A coding schedule was devised to measure the frequency of appearance of nine specific categories that determined the degree of sexuality within each individual advertisement. Each category was rated out of ten, the lowest being the least sexual and the highest being the most sexual. See section 3.3 - Coding Schedule for the complete category definitions and application methods.

#### **3.2.4 Source**

Various methods were employed to obtain the 144 magazines that were needed for the analysis. For example, numerous book and magazine exchanges were approached countless times and contacted every month for three months, after which posters were distributed outlining the required magazines with the researcher's contact details. A large number of magazines were bought at the Rotary International fundraiser 'Bookarama' book fair. Dentist and doctors' waiting rooms and hair salons were scouted throughout Christchurch. One-hundred posters requesting magazines were posted on university notice boards and announcements were made by University of Canterbury Mass Communication staff and tutors in lectures. This proved to be very successful and, surprisingly, students donated the required issues and did not request the offered payment that was shown on the posters. One set of magazines was bid for and purchased off the online auction website e-bay. In addition, while on vacation in the United States and the United Kingdom the researcher visited numerous second-hand book and magazine dealers.

Once all of these non-cost and affordable options were exhausted the researcher purchased back-issues from the publishers in Australia and the United Kingdom. This was a rather expensive method of obtaining the magazines due to shipping costs and international pricing and was therefore used as a last resort. After six months of intensive searching, three of the 144 issues could not be located.

### 3.3 Coding Schedule

---

A coding schedule is a tool that allows a ‘valid and reliable category scheme to count the number of times a piece of content fits each category’ (Baran 1999: 352).

Development of an appropriate coding schedule was a key part of this research. It was a fundamental tool in this analysis as it was used to quantitatively measure the degree of sexuality in each individual advertisement. Below is an explanation of the terms and definitions used in the coding schedule. Information on placement of the advertisement within the magazine, the product category featured in the advertisement and whether the advertisement has been celebrity endorsed has also been recorded.

The unique coding schedule developed specifically for this research incorporated aspects of Erving Goffman’s 1979 study, *Gender Advertisements*. This provides a sound basis from which to formulate a coding schedule. Advertising images, and advertising technologies have changed, thus some methods of analysis have also changed from Goffman’s era. For example, close up, high-resolution photographs were not technologically possible in 1979, thus techniques such as fragmentation were not used in Goffman’s time but are often used in advertising today. However, even 25 years on, Goffman is still considered by many as the benchmark for quantitative content analysis of the representation of gender in advertising. Goffman’s techniques have been used in various studies, such as Linder (2004), and Kang (1997); as well as referred to by authors such as Diane Barthel Associate Professor of Sociology at the State University of New York, Stony Brook, author of *Putting on Appearances: Gender and Advertising* (1988), and by Sociology Professor Anthony J. Cortese, author of *Provocateur: Images of Women and Minorities in Advertising* (1999) as well as numerous others. In essence, it is difficult to read a text about gender and advertising without some reference regarding Goffman’s work. In this analysis, his work was used as an initial template for the coding schedule.

#### 3.3.1 Terms and Definitions of the Coding Schedule

Nine categories were used in the coding schedule: colour/text; pose/sexual pose; action shot vs. still shot; facial expression; clothing and shoes; nakedness; fragmentation; feminine touch; settings and props. For each category a number out of ten was given to rate the degree of sexuality – zero being the least sexual and ten being the most sexual.



For example, if one of the categories such as colour/text was deemed as just above sexual it would rate 6/10 or if a model was shown nearly completely naked than the nakedness category would be rated as exceptionally sexual with a 9/10, while complete nakedness would result in a 10/10. Then to find the overall sexuality for each advertisement the scores from the nine categories were averaged. Weighting of results from each category was considered but was discounted due to the subjectivity this could have introduced as discussed in section 3.6 - Limitations.

These terms and their definitions are explained below. Some detailed examples are provided with a range of advertisements to demonstrate how these terms and definitions function to rate the degree of sexuality on the coding schedule overall.

### 3.3.1.1 Colour/Text



Both text and colour are used to set the tone of the advertisement from the outset. These two terms are analysed together because they complement one another and often the text in an advertisement is colour co-ordinated to fit the images and or products advertised. The 'Accessorize' advertisement above is a good example of this.

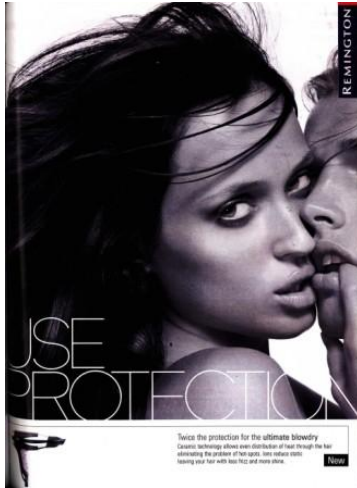
The choice of colour largely determines the suggested level of sexuality within the advertisement and 'colours have culturally important meanings to people' (Berger 2003: 41). For example, the use of the colour red 'symbolizes love and passion' (Achen 1978: 28), while the colour white generally signifies purity and virginity. Pink is seen to be very feminine which can also be deemed as sexual while pastel type colouring generally refers to non-sexual. The use of black and white in images is found by some as sexual. In Reichert's (2003) study 'a young woman claimed that "black and white ads" are what she finds sexy in advertising' (ibid: 37). The use of bright, bold colours is also deemed as

sexual. In addition, skin colour – the colour of flesh – is viewed as sexual in this analysis because it symbolises nakedness.

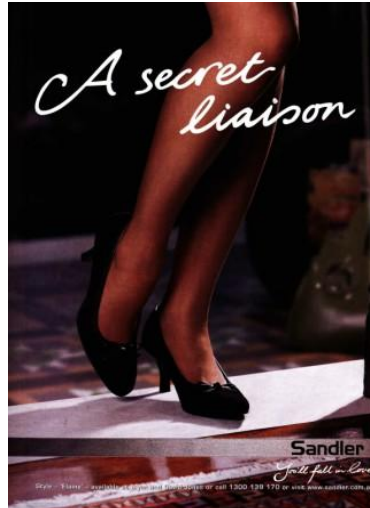
Hence, colour plays a significant role as ‘the viewer’s eyes are drawn to various images and via co-ordinated tones or colour underlining. ‘Themes are established through colour either by relying on stereotypical associations or by creating new colour significations’ (McCracken 1993: 29). Below is an example of two advertisements for similar hair products. It shows how colour is used to subtly set the tone of the advertisement and enhances the degree of sexuality. In this analysis the advertisement on the left will rate higher on the coding schedule than the advertisement on the right. This is because of the extensive use of the colour red which increases the degree of sexuality within the advertisement.



Text used within advertising depicts the level of sexuality from the outset as ‘sexual language and words constitute examples of sex in adverting’ (Reichert 2003: 37). Words such as ‘passion’ and ‘lust’ tend to refer to extreme levels of sexuality, while ‘romance’ and ‘hug’ generally connote lesser levels. The images on the following page are some specific examples from within the analysis.



(a)



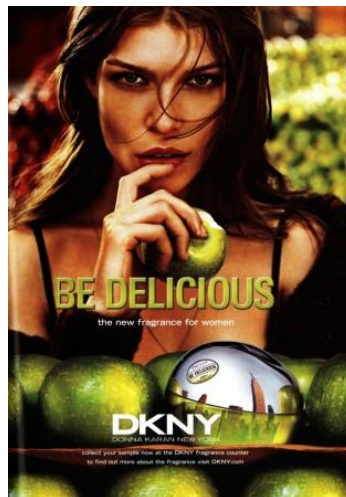
(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)

“Skin good enough to eat”, “Be Delicious”, “Chilli choc fling. Lust isn’t a Nibble, it’s a bite” and “Use Protection” are all a play on words. All of these phrases have sexual undertones that add extra meaning to the advertisement. In advertisement (a), a play on words and arbitrary meanings are relied on for the actual meaning and context of the advertisement to be understood. At first glance, the words “use protection” may seem to be referring to the image of two people kissing and what this may lead to, although in fact it is referring to using protection for hair. The sexual connotations derived from the words used may work as a point of difference for the advertised product. In advertisement (b), the words “A Secret Liaison” provide context and meaning. Removal of these words would result in an advertisement featuring a pair of legs and shoes and the

degree of sexuality would diminish. As is often the case ‘sometimes phrases have innocent meanings until they are accompanied by sexual images’ (Reichert 2003: 37). In advertisement (c), the product, a perfume by Elizabeth Arden is named ‘Provocative Woman’. Slightly behind the fragrance bottle stands Hollywood siren Catherine Zeta Jones dressed in a modern style courtesan dress. Down alongside her partially revealed upper thigh run the words ‘Men will melt’. In this instance, text is relied on to convey the sexual meaning within the advertisement. ‘Language conditions what we think and indeed delineates the possibilities for what we feel about circumstances’ and alludes to the possibilities within advertising (Coward 1984: 127).

Sometimes, the use of text can make an advertisement significantly more sexual to the point that it can be deemed offensive. The image below is of a billboard proposed for Auckland International Airport. The airport company refused to allow the advertisement. One News reported that the advertisement would have been acceptable without the text ‘horny’. According to the airport’s general retail manager “That one was maybe just one step too far” (NZ Herald 2007).



Colour and language may at first seem small and insignificant in such an analysis. However, these attributes often play a key role in determining the varying degrees of sexuality in advertising. ‘Settings and Props’ work in well with language and colour. This is addressed later in section 3.3.1.83.3.1.8.



### 3.3.1.2 Pose/Sexual Pose



(a)



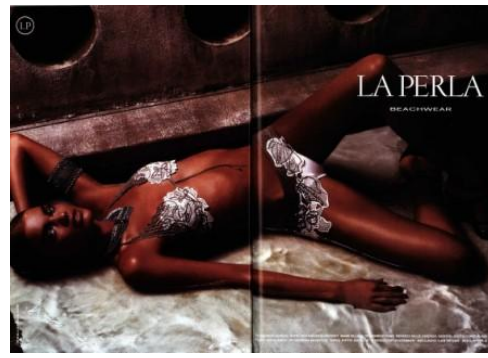
(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)

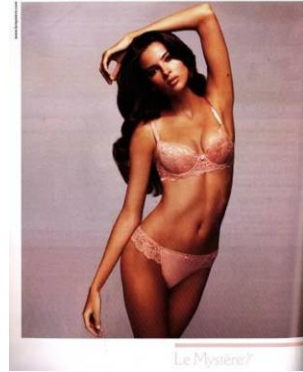
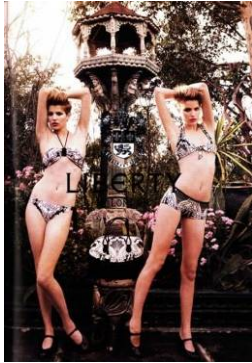


(f)

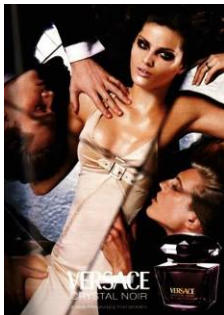
Generally, the pose of the models is indicative of the level of sexuality featured within the advertisement. Traditional poses such as hands on hips leaning slightly more on one leg than the other is indicative as just slightly sexual. However, if the model is photographed playing with her hair and leaning forward revealing her cleavage than this is determined as quite sexual. 'General fashion now frequently shows women in postures drawn directly from pornography. Shots emphasize bottoms, or reveal women lying in inviting postures, legs apart' (Coward 1984: 59). This is indicative of an extremely sexual pose.

In advertising, 'models often exhibit "head and body tilting" or other "canting postures" that communicate an acceptance of subordination through a lowering of the head with respect to the viewer of the picture' (McCracken 1993: 22). Moreover, 'blank stare, low neckline, and body position with hand on hip, leaning slightly forward, combine to sexualize her' (McCracken 1993: 100). According to Erving Goffman, 'women frequently...are posed in a display of the "bashful knee bend"' (Goffman 1979: 45) (see image (b) above) which is a common pose used by contemporary models. With regards to 'canting' of the head (image (c)), Goffman continues, 'the level of the head is lowered

relative to ... the viewer of the picture. The resulting configurations can be read as an acceptance of subordination...submissiveness and appeasement' (1979: 46) by the viewer of the advertisement.



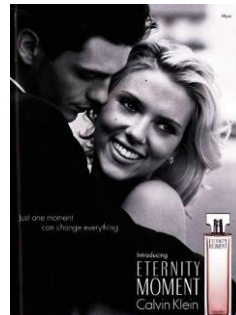
In traditional 'bikini-beach' model poses (such as those shown above) the hands/arms are at an angle touching or holding the head/hair, thus exposing the models entire body to the viewer's gaze. These types of images can vary greatly in their degrees of sexuality, and the poses work to objectify women because they are unnatural and 'doll-like' in nature.



(g)



(h)



(i)



(j)

'Sexual Pose' refers to advertisements where both genders are featured; it is usually assumed that the male is positioned in the advertisement to enhance the female's level of sexuality. Advertisement (g) and (h) above are good examples of such sexual enhancement – the woman is positioned in the centre of the advertisement with men's faces and hands forming a protective, adoring circle around her, increasing her femininity and sexuality. While in contrast advertisements (i) and (j) portray men and women in varying degrees of intimacy – from romance to passion.

Any form of touching is usually considered to be quite sexual while kissing and similar acts are deemed as extremely sexual because 'there's a common assertion that kissing is the ultimate symbol of sexual passion' and desire (Coward 1984: 95). The same notion

applies to two people of the same gender kissing or in intimate positions. Some examples of such images are shown below.



Sexual pose and pose are quite different – one features two or more people in positions of intimacy the other does not. Irrespective of this difference, these categories were merged because ‘sexual pose’ although very important did not warrant a separate category. This is because during the analysis of over 5000 advertisements it was discovered that images of two people in intimate positions were surprisingly rare. Therefore, these categories were merged to be as representative of the majority of the images as possible.

### 3.3.1.3 Actions shot vs. still shot

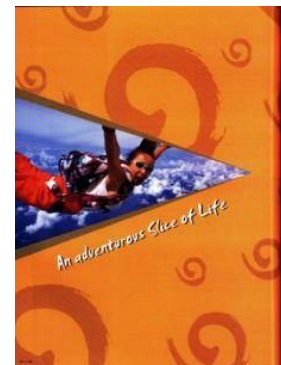
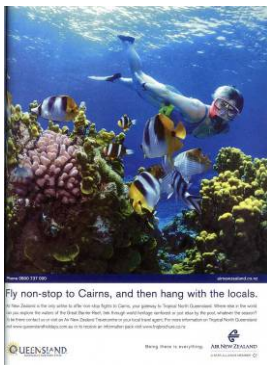


An action shot is deemed as not sexual while a still shot is generally considered sexual. This varies from image to image, although this term generally highlights distinct ‘female passivity and male activity’ (Root 1984: 21) and focuses on how women look rather than what they are doing. For example, the above static images show models in traditional poses which are deemed as ‘passive’ and tend to dominate women’s magazine advertising and therefore increase the degree of sexuality overall. Action shots have historically only



featured men. A historical study of *Active Women in Ads* conducted by Poe in 1986 found that ‘more numerous and more varied magazine ads portraying women in sports were found in 1928 than in 1956 and 1972’ and that ‘many of the sports ads gave the impression of being more of a sexual than athletic nature’.

In contrast, men are almost always ‘shown as actively doing something...involved in strenuous outdoor activities’ or at the very least ‘have captions describing them as top executives, racing drivers or skilled craftsmen’ (Root 1984: 65). Men are seldom ‘posed’ in traditional stances such as women, although this is increasing. Below, are some advertisements of women in ‘action shots’ actively partaking in outdoor activities – under-water diving, running and sky-diving. These types of images occur infrequently in the general interest and fashion genre of women’s magazines.



Interestingly, action shots such as these often show women in tight sports clothing or swimwear in exotic, naturalistic locations and yet this is not portrayed in a sexual way which decreases the degree of sexuality substantially. However, this is not the case with the ‘Active Intent’ sports apparel advertisement – image (a) on the following page. The woman is shown running up steps wearing small shorts that emphasize the length of her legs and bring attention to her bottom. A man is also featured in the advertisement although all of the attention is focused on the woman and specifically the aforementioned body parts. Advertising an ‘Active Sportswear’ brand is the purpose of the advertisement and it yet it seems that only one item of clothing – and specifically only one body part – is the focus. All of these reasons combined would increase the degree of sexuality when compared with other ‘action’ shots, such as those detailed above.





(a)



(b)

Advertisement (b) on the right above is a paradox within this category because it is a mix between action/still shot. It shows a woman parachuting out of a plane; yet she is dressed in a tight-fitting and revealing air hostess's uniform and not in functional parachuting attire. She is posed in a feminine, lady-like manner sipping on a cup of coffee. Initially, this may appear as an action shot due to the plane and parachute, but further analysis would deem it to be a still shot due to the woman's facial expression, pose and attire.

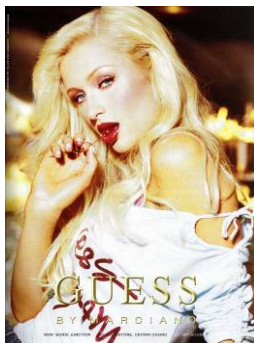
### 3.3.1.4 Facial Expression

A model's facial expression is very indicative of the level of sexuality within the advertisement – it is perhaps the term that defines the degree of sexuality the most. Pouting and intently gazing at the reader ranges from being quite sexual to extremely sexual depending on the specific image. Smiling and or looking away is generally determined with lesser degrees of sexuality, although in some cases it is considered to be a portrayal of submissiveness and is therefore deemed as sexual. In the past, smiling models used to grace the covers of women's magazine and frequent advertising images. Angela Carter, a post-feminist author and journalist noted in 1975 that 'the models have stopped smiling' (Coward 1984: 57). Advertisers and Women's magazine editors had questioned the emergence of these glum-faced models.

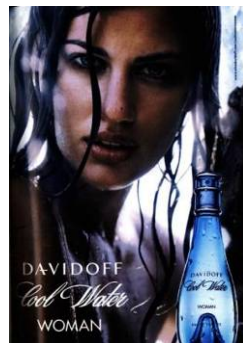
'Remember the days when every news-stand was alive with white teeth, flashing deep and crisp and even, on everything from high fashion glossy to mass circulation weekly? Now rows of unsmiling faces gaze out from these covers, lips firmly

closed...expressions ranging from outright scowl to helpless dreamy, hunted or gently resigned' (A. de Courcy, *Standard*, 31 August 1982 in Coward 1984: 57)

It has been suggested that the surfacing of this glum facial expression has partly transpired for two reasons: fashion and feminism. Firstly, the constant change in fashion has ultimately resulted in a need for models to change with the times and adapt a new look to suit the needs of the designers, photographers, advertisers and the industry at large. It is also a partial response to feminism. Feminists objected to advertisements showing 'stereotypical portrayals of the smiling woman, submissive and anxious to please' (ibid). Although it is difficult to see how this glum, non-smiling look is an improvement; if anything it tends to reflect the expressions that are commonly used in pornography.



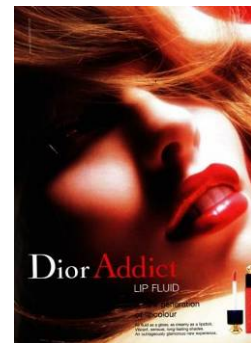
(a)



(b)



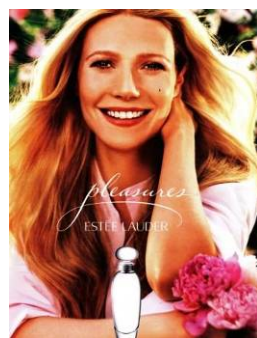
(c)



(d)



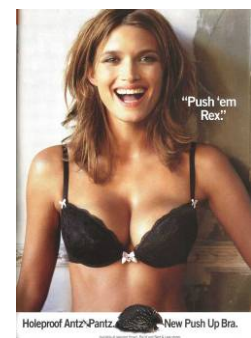
(e)



(f)



(g)



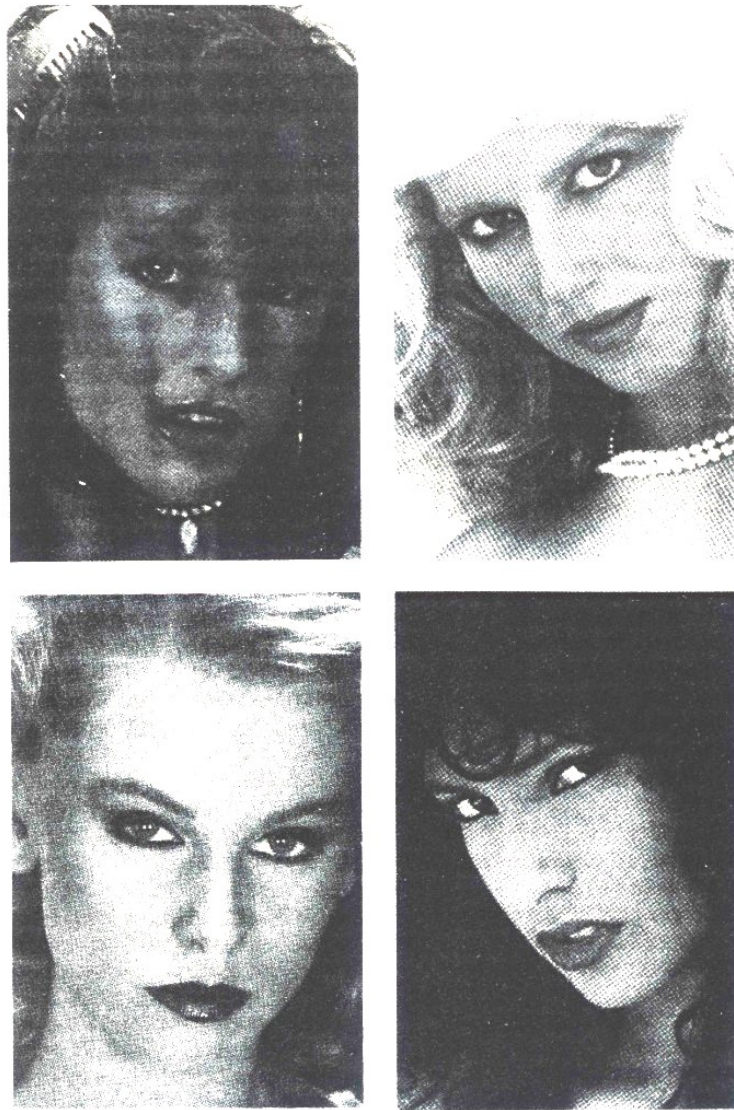
(h)

In contrast to the feminist perspective, the above advertisements used in this analysis exemplify that the smiling images (bottom row) appear less sexual than the non-smiling images (top row). To a large extent, the act of smiling personalises women and this personalisation works to desexualise the image. Advertisement (h) is a prime example

showing a model wearing a black and lacy cleavage-enhancing bra that is very sexy. However, her wide smile lights up the advertisement which largely distracts from the degree of sexuality. In the past, smiling used to be thought of as 'inviting and seductive' (ibid: 57) although this has clearly been overtaken by the new look used in advertising. The current facial expression known as 'the look', which dominates modern advertising, abides by certain codes; slightly parted lips that denote sexual arousal and narrowed eyes which denote sexual interest and portray animalistic sexual instinct.

'The look, above all, is meant to denote the ultimate state of sexual arousal; the woman's seriousness denotes readiness for sex...The look of defiance, the pouting and scowling faces, are part of the current tendency to represent women as attractive' and sexually desirable (Coward 1984: 59).

Moreover, the move away from the smile to the pout is further illustrated in the images on the following page, three of which derive from a pornographic men's magazine and one which comes from a general interest women's fashion magazine. It is difficult to determine which image derives from the women's magazine.



Scanned from Root 1984:45

The above examples show that ‘facial expression’ is a very important term on the coding schedule and a vital tool when determining the degree of sexuality.

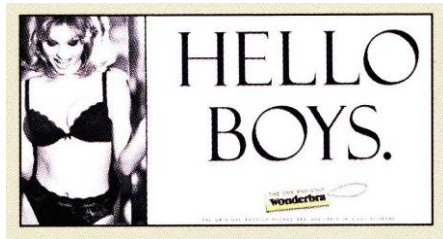
### **3.3.1.5 Clothing and shoes**

‘By far the most discussed and clearest examples of sex in advertising revolve around clothing – what models are wearing or not wearing’ (Reichert 2003: 33).

An image of a high heel, a bikini or lingerie signifies a degree of sexuality to such an extent that the product could be promoted on its own due to its own sexual merit. This is often the case and is exemplified over the page in advertisement (a) by a pair of Gucci high heels. According to beauty and health journalist Stephanie Perderson, “the bra is perhaps the most powerful element of a woman’s wardrobe. What other item of clothing



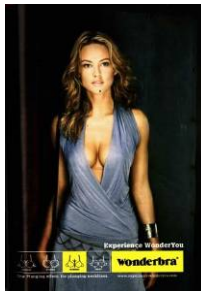
inspires such devotion, yearning, admiration, frustration and delight?” (2004: 8). The 1980s marks the rise of the ‘wonderbra’ and some very successful advertising campaigns that boosted the bra industry quite literally! Below, are three examples of advertisements from that era followed by two advertisements from 2005-2006. The later advertisements (c) and (d), show that the use of sexy, revealing clothing – and a pair of good breasts – continue to be a key promotional tools in an advertiser’s campaign kit.



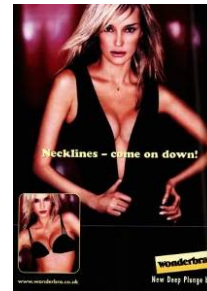
(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

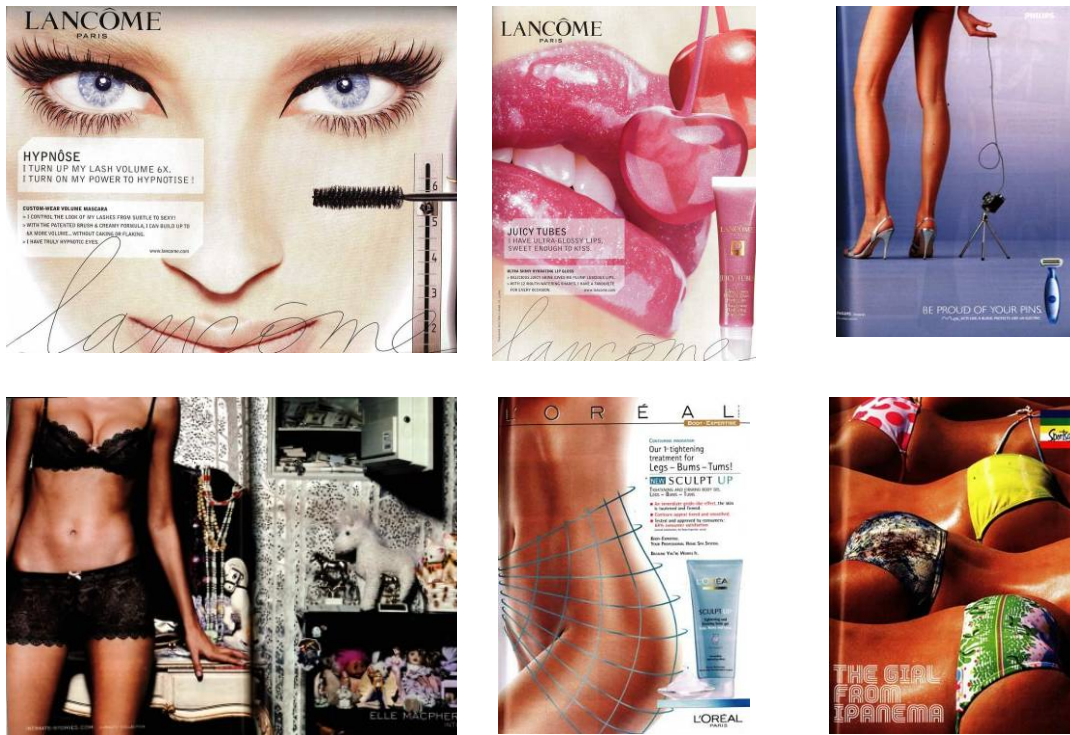
A model clad in tight-fitting and revealing clothing is determined as sexual to extremely sexual in this analysis. For example, evening wear and bikinis would receive an above-average sexual rating and loose and baggy clothing would result in a very low rating. The same applies to high heels (image (f) on the following page - sexual) and sports shoes (non-sexual). Unlike the high heel, an example of a sports shoe as the focal point of an advertisement could not be found. These types of clothes and shoes are often found in women’s magazine advertising because ‘magazines imply that one will attract male sexual desire by wearing a certain fashion or make-up look’ (McCracken 1993: 160) and are therefore central when defining the degree of sexuality of women in advertising.



described the physical features of models as sexual, “when women or men are showing a lot of skin. I relate nakedness to sexy’ (ibid: 34). In the historical section of the literature review Reichert identified the Calvin Klein Campaign as one of the most sexual campaigns in contemporary advertising.



### 3.3.1.7 Fragmentation



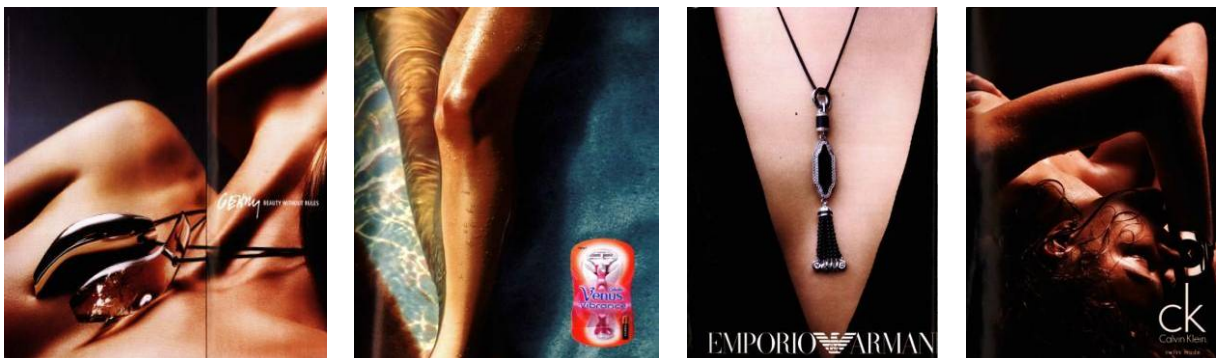
Fragmentation of a woman's body usually consists of focusing on the traditionally predetermined sexual body parts, such as legs, breasts, buttocks or lips.

In make-up advertisements, fragmentation is often used showing only the woman's lips or eyes, what is historically seen as extremely sexual. In essence, the art of fragmentation is used as a tool by advertisers since ‘numerous ads utilize...fragmentation that appears only to relate to companies needs to market products for certain parts of the of the body’ (McCracken 1993: 122) such as the eyes when advertising mascara or torsos when advertising skin firming lotions. Moreover, according to Anthony Cortese,



‘women’s bodies are often dismembered or hacked apart in ads. When their bodies are separated into parts, women cease to be seen as whole persons. This perpetuates the notion that a woman’s body is not linked to her mind, soul and emotions...the implication is that women are objects’ (1999: 31).

Incessant repetition of such images in women’s magazine advertising and in other media normalise the notion of women as objects. In some images the fragmentation is so severe that the image no longer resembles a woman but a lone body part that has been transformed into an object – a detached thing used to push a product and nothing else. ‘Each body part becomes eroticised and sexual, to-be-looked-at and marvelled in. The whole outer surface of the body is transformed into an exquisite, passive thing’ (Root 1984: 66)

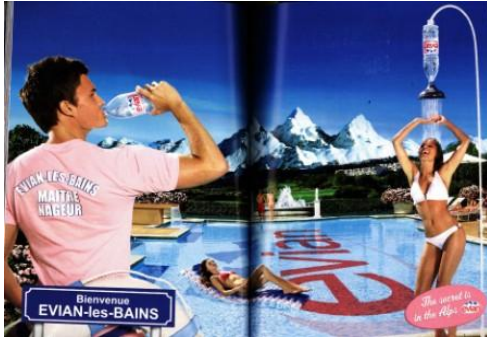


In the above images it may be difficult to determine which body part is being shown, which is the essence of fragmentation. Even in their obscurity the images remain perfect and flawless just like most images of women in advertising. It is ironic that even dismembered body parts are air-brushed – in some cases even more so.



### 3.3.1.8 Setting and props

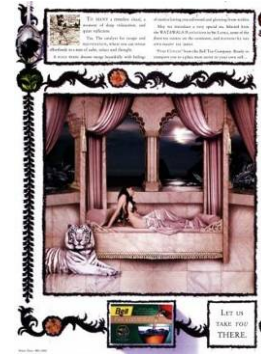
This is an important category because the setting provides a frame for the advertised image, while props often enhance the product or provide a twist in the advertisement.



(a)



(b)



(c)

A photograph set in a wild and natural environment is usually portrayed as more sexual than an image set in a sterile setting, for example the beach and a living room. 'Exotic settings promise sensual delights forbidden in mainstream Western Society. This sensuality derives from images of warm sand, of wild animals...of unfamiliar mores, including sexual mores' (Barthel 1988: 80). A natural image tends to be out of focus and less stylized than a sterilised one. Advertisements (a) and (b) above are good examples of natural settings, while advertisement (c) features a wild animal as referred to by Barthel.



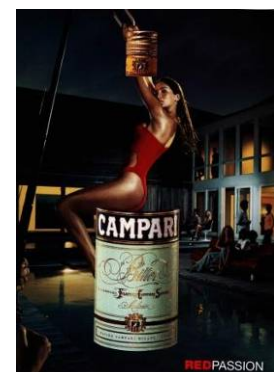
(d)



(e)



(f)



(g)

Props overlap into this category because they are usually intertwined with settings to produce the overall image. Props are important in determining the degree sexuality and are used in numerous ways. The advertisements above all use certain props to cement the meaning of the advertisement. In advertisement (d) the soap suds are formed into pouted

lips to symbolise that the model is being kissed all over, in (e) the model is half eating/kissing a bright red strawberry which emphasizes her mouth, and in (f) – pending on individual perceptions – the ropes could indirectly symbolise sexual bondage fantasies. Not all props in advertising are laced with such intense sexual undertones; however, all of these are examples of ‘high’ to ‘exceptionally high’ degrees of sexuality within the props and settings category on this coding schedule. It is difficult to see advertisement (g) due to its dark setting. It shows a woman wearing a red swimsuit perched on a bottle of alcohol; she is held up by or ‘hooked’ in by a large fish hook with a swimming pool in the background. The juxtaposition of unrelated settings combined with props point to an exceptionally high degree of sexuality.

An advertisement may be portrayed in a sterile setting but specific props, such a car or a bed may increase the level of sexuality within it. ‘Beds and floors ...and persons using them will be positioned lower than anyone sitting or standing. These positions are, of course, also a conventionalized expression of sexual availability’ (Jhally 1990: 133).

Other examples of advertisements using props in a sexual manner have already been shown in previous sections of this coding schedule. For example, in section 3.3.1.1, the Lancome lipstick advertisement featured a bright red apple, while the “skin good enough to eat” advertisement featured a naked model as part of the meal.

#### **3.3.1.9 Feminine Touch**

This category derives directly from Erving Goffman’s (1979) study and is defined as ‘light and caressing bringing attention to the object being advertised, or to parts of her body, conveying a sense of delicacy’ and preciousness.

The images on the following page show the numerous examples of feminine touch works. Often the fingers placed directly in the mouth such as in advertisements (a), (b) and (c). This can be referred to as ‘finger sucking’ and is deemed to be the most sexual way in which this category can be portrayed. At other times, feminine touch is used to highlight the delicacy of the women’s body such as in advertisement (d).



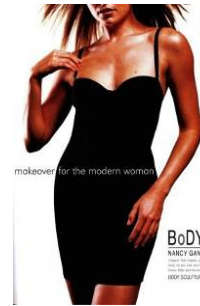
(a)



(b)

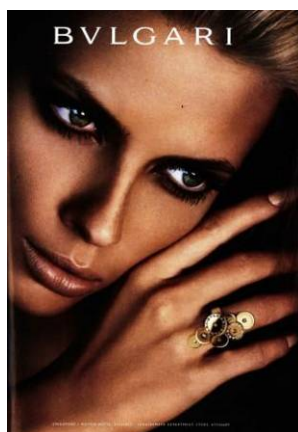


(c)



(d)

Spread-out long fingers work to bring attention to whatever part of the model they are touching – usually the mouth, face or hair, such as in advertisement (e) below. Slightly curved fingers increase the model's femininity and bring an air of fragility and femininity, as shown in advertisement (f). The degree of sexuality is subtly conveyed in the way hands/fingers are shown in advertising.



(e)



(f)

In contrast, 'men are depicted grasping, squeezing, clenching, manipulating, shaping, or gripping objects' (Cortese 1999: 35-36). This contrast works to further highlight the delicacy of women.

This category, 'Feminine touch' often brings and unveils the degree of sexuality in an image where before there was none to be seen. Advertisements (g) and (h) on the following page are good examples of this, while advertisements (i) and (j) show how feminine touch is used to frame the model.



(g)



(h)



(i)



(j)

Feminine touch is a tool frequently used in women's magazine advertising. As the above images exemplify, it can be used in numerous forms to not only subtly increase the degree of sexuality but bring a level of sexuality to an otherwise sexually benign advertisement.

### 3.3.2 Placement and Size of Advertisements

Full-page, left, right, double, triple and back page advertising placement occurs in magazines and according to Ellen McCracken 'is a significant factor in advertising communication...because of the degree of visibility it gives an ad' (1993: 91). For example, a right-page advertisement receives more attention by the reader than a left-page advertisement, because one's gaze naturally views the right-page first while turning the pages of the magazine.

This information was recorded, due to its importance in the overall analysis of advertising; but it was not used in the final analysis.

Size was not relevant because only full page advertisements were part of the analysis.

### 3.3.3 Product Category

The products featured in the advertisements were entered into the coding schedule as 'Product Categories'. There were seven such product categories; beauty, hair care, fragrance, personal, shoes/clothing, household and other.

These categories were used because these ranges of products are most prominent in general/fashion women's magazine advertising. In the analysis, these product categories were used to establish if the degree of sexuality coincides with the advertised product,

and in which demographic these more sexualized advertisements are found. Each category is described below.

#### **3.3.3.1 Beauty**

Firstly, ‘beauty’ refers to traditional make-up, such as lipstick, mascara and foundation, as well as contemporary make-up, such as tinted/flavoured lip balm/gloss. Secondly, this category also includes age-defying crèmes; these have been listed here because these age-related products are deemed to be part of a beauty procedure rather than a hygienic one. This is a central category because we live in a time and society where ‘increasing emphasis is being placed on identities based on appearances, rather than on other, more durable, criteria’ (Barthel 1988: 3) and a ‘great emphasis on decoration of the female body, achieved through fashion and cosmetics’ (Barthel 1988: 8) is central in advertising. This reasoning is also relevant to the latter categories – hair care, fragrance and personal products – because all of these products combined enhance the attractiveness and therefore the degree of sexuality of the individual.

#### **3.3.3.2 Hair Care**

This category covers any product that is related to hair care, such as shampoo, conditioner and styling products. It also includes hair colouring products and hair accessories.

#### **3.3.3.3 Fragrance**

This category includes perfumes, body sprays and roll-on deodorants.

#### **3.3.3.4 Personal**

This is a very large category and includes personal care products that do not fall under any of the first three categories; beauty, hair care or fragrance. Personal products can be defined as products related to personal hygiene, such as body wash, facial cleansers and toners, razors and sanitary products. Personal products such as oral contraceptives and condoms were included here also.

#### **3.3.3.5 Shoes/Clothing**

This category includes all clothes advertised, such as lingerie, beach wear and street apparel. With regards to shoes, it includes jandals, high heels and sneakers. It must be



noted that this shoes/clothing product category is different from the ‘clothing and shoes’ category previously outlined in the sexual rankings.

### 3.3.3.6 Household

This is a large category that covers everything that is specifically house focused, such as duvet covers, bathroom tiles, furniture, cleaning products and so forth. This category will also include food and over the counter medicines.

### 3.3.3.7 Other

This category includes every product that cannot be placed into the previous categories, such as cars, holidays, and entertainment. Products that are placed in this category are an indicator of products that are not traditionally advertised in general/fashion women’s magazines. However, ‘other’ also covers accessories such as bags, watches and sunglasses. These products tend to be frequently advertised in up-market women’s magazines such as Vogue.

### 3.3.4 Use of Celebrities

Celebrities are instantly recognised by the viewer of an advertisement. This instant recognition functions to automatically make familiar the face often without a body, and without the context of a social setting. Momentarily, the advertised product proves secondary to the celebrity who dominates the image.



In the images above, Kate Moss, Charlise Theron, Nicole Kidman and Scarlett Johansson use their celebrity status to promote relatively different products – a lipstick, fragrances, and tan-building lotion. They are no more suited to be the face of these products than any other model. However, their high-profile modelling and acting careers – that are often lived out in the tabloid press – arm them with a status that the advertisers are seeking.

Their faces, names and bodies are used as a point of difference amongst all the other thousands of products of the same type.

Why purchase any old lipstick when you can wear the same brand worn by Kate Moss or any other of these famous icons? Or so the rhetoric goes:

‘It is a powerful combination, celebrity and naked skin’

(Hugh M. Hefner, 2006:7)

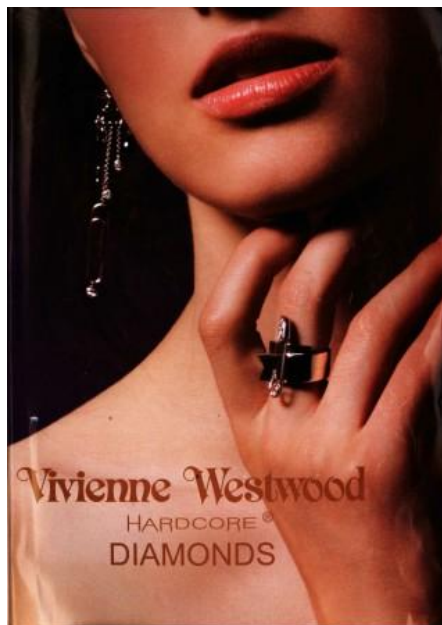
The use of celebrities was recorded, but was not used in the final analysis to determine the degree of sexuality.

## 3.4 Application of Coding Schedule

---

Below are two examples of different advertisements that demonstrate how the nine categories of the coding schedule were combined to determine the degree of sexuality in individual advertisements during the seven-week ‘encoding period’ of over 5000 advertisements. It outlines step-by-step the functionality of the coding schedule and shows how each category was analysed.

### 3.4.1 Vivienne Westwood – Hardcore Diamonds



In the advertisement above, a very high degree of sexuality would be attained in four of the nine categories: Fragmentation, Feminine Touch, Nakedness, and Action/Still. This image is a perfect example of these categories. With regards to Fragmentation, the rating would be high because only half of the model’s face and a small portion of her shoulder are shown. This dismemberment of the model’s body and lack of eye contact de-personalises and objectifies her. Feminine Touch is evident with the emphasis on the curved hand/fingers which are the central focal point of the picture’s composition, and highlight the vulnerability of the model. Nakedness and Action/Still are equally evident; the model is traditionally posed in a feminine still pose and from what can be seen she is completely naked.



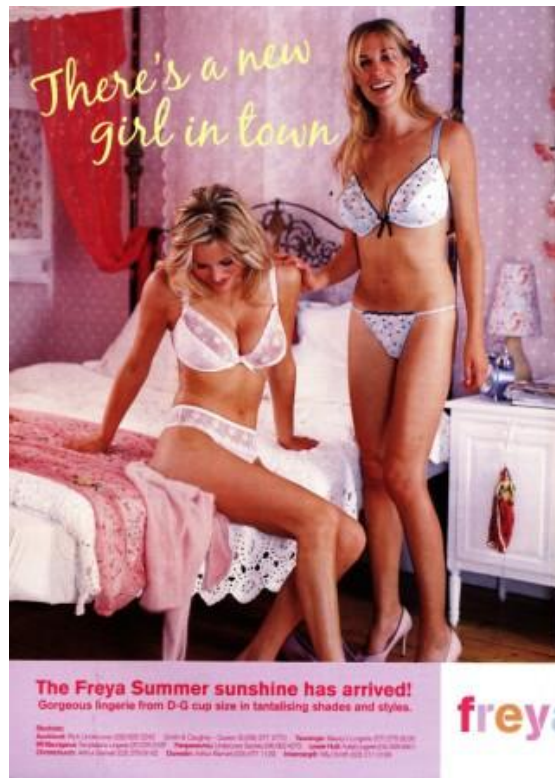
Colour/Text and Facial Expression would both rate above average degrees of sexuality. The Text is not at all sexual, however, the Colour part of the category compensates for this. ‘Nude’ – the colour of flesh – is viewed as sexual because it symbolises utter nakedness which is linked to sexiness and the act of sex itself, and ‘nude’ is one of the predominant colours featured. Facial Expression also rates above average because even though only half of the model’s face is shown, a pouted mouth is deemed as sexual (refer to facial expression section of the coding schedule (section 3.3.1.4) for more examples of this). Pose/Sexual Pose rates between average to below average. Sexual Pose is non-existent because no male is featured and the model’s pose is considered reasonably sexual due to the tilting head and hand positioning. Finally, both Settings/Props and Clothing/Shoes receive zero for the degree of sexuality because they are not featured. Overall, in the analysis this advertisement received a score of 5.6/10, which was slightly above the average. The breakdown across each of the nine categories is shown below in Table 4.

**Table 4 –Sexuality scores – Vivienne Westwood Hardcore Diamonds**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Sexuality score</b>
Colour/text	5
Pose/Sexual Pose	5
Action/Still	10
Facial Expression	3
Clothing/shoes	0
Nakedness	10
Fragmentation	10
Setting/props	0
Feminine Touch	7
<b>Overall average</b>	<b>5.6</b>

### 3.4.2 Freya Summer Sunshine

This advertisement below is strikingly different to the advertisement above. This second example demonstrates how the same categories are applied to such diverse images.



In this advertisement, very high degrees of sexuality would be attained in five of the nine categories. Clothing/Shoes would receive the highest rating possible because the models are clad in lacy and feminine lingerie and one of them is also wearing high heels which are deemed as sexual. Nakedness would receive an exceptionally high rating because the lingerie only covers the bare essentials of the models' bodies. Action/Still and Pose/Sexual Pose would also attain very high ratings because the models are posed in a traditional still pose where Erving Goffman's, 'bashful knee bend' is evident, and the model on the bed is looking downward in a coy manner. Furthermore, Sexual Pose tends to refer to men and women, however, in this case two women posed together can also be perceived as sexual pending on the reader's own interpretation of the image.

Colour/Text and Settings/Props would both receive an above-average degree of sexuality rating. The image is set in a feminine bedroom which is styled in virginal and pastel colouring, also due to the models' degree of nakedness the 'nude' colour is also largely prominent. Facial Expression is just below average because one of the models is smiling while the other is looking down and it is this shadowing of the face that gives it a slight degree of sexuality. Lastly, Feminine Touch would score at the bottom of the scale because it is hardly featured. Overall, this advertisement received a score of 6.9. The breakdown is shown below in Table 5.

**Table 5 –Sexuality scores – Freya Summer Sunshine Lingerie**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Sexuality score</b>
Colour/text	6
Pose/Sexual Pose	10
Action/Still	10
Facial Expression	4
Clothing/shoes	10
Nakedness	9
Fragmentation	1
Setting/props	9
Feminine Touch	3
<b>Overall average</b>	<b>6.9</b>

This comparative ‘coding schedule functionality’ analysis example shows that advertisement b) has an overall higher degree of sexuality than advertisement a) because it rates higher on the degree of sexuality scale more often. Furthermore, this detailed example demonstrates precisely how the coding schedule was applied to each of the 5,198 advertisements analysed, during the encoding period. It should be noted that the degree of sexuality rating is subjective in nature and therefore retains a qualitative aspect.

## 3.5 Results, Analysis and Discussion

---

This section arguably brings new meaning and understanding to the use of sex in women's magazine advertising. The findings from the analysis of over 5000 advertisements reveal a number of interesting results.

This section presents:

- The number of advertisements analysed in each demographic
- The demographic, magazine title and product categories with the highest degree of sexuality
- Discussion of specific advertisements which had the highest degrees of sexuality
- The most sexual aspects within advertisements as determined by the coding schedule
- Case studies of particular product categories and other points of note
- Discussion of interesting and unexpected results

Graphs and example advertising images are used to assist in the explanation of the results.

### 3.5.1 Terminology

In this section, the following terminology applies:

*Title* refers to the group of magazines – for example, all the Cleo magazines analysed from January to December.

*Issue* refers to one specific magazine – for example, Cleo March.

*Demographic* refers to a group of four titles – for instance, the young demographic which included Cosmopolitan, Cleo and Harper's Bazaar and She magazines.

### 3.5.2 How many advertisements were analysed?

One hundred and forty one magazine issues were analysed. From these, 5198 full-page advertisements were analysed overall. This is a high number of advertisements, but it does not account for all of the advertisements featured within the 141 titles. The 5198 analysed advertisements represent only a quarter to half of the advertising featured because only full-page advertisements were analysed. Each advertisement was originally coded according to 11 categories from the coding schedule. This totalled 57,178 single data entry points over a seven-week period.

### 3.5.3 How many advertisements were analysed in each demographic?

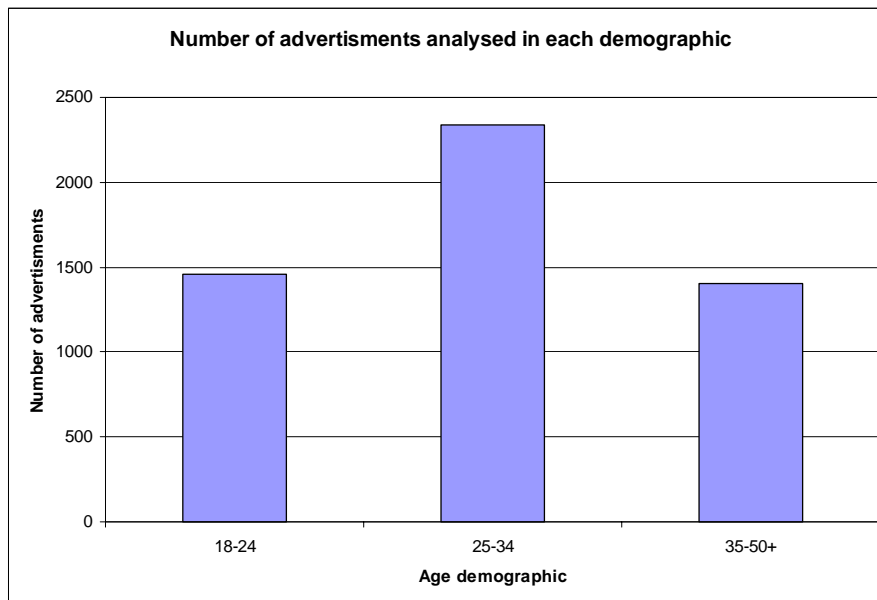
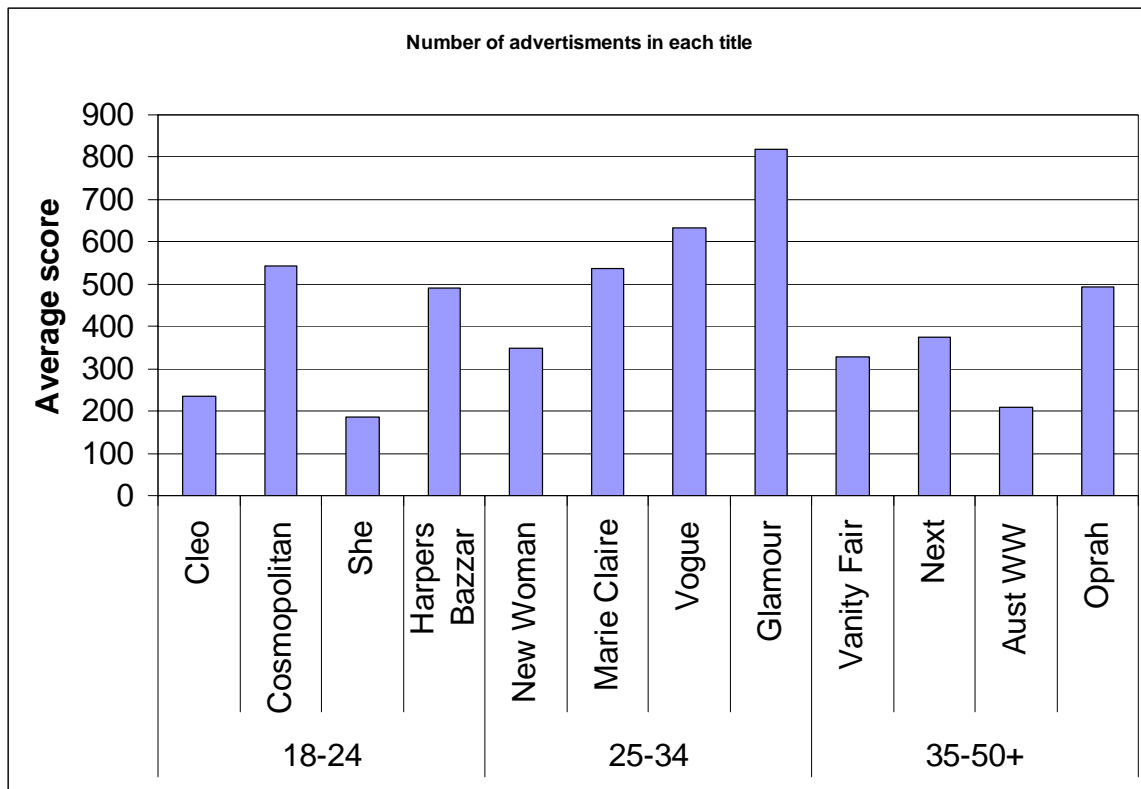


Figure 3 - Advertisements by demographics

Figure 3 reveals that the 25-34 year age demographic contains the highest number of advertisements by quite a substantial margin. Interestingly, the oldest demographic which is marketed as the least sexual has nearly as many advertisements as the youngest and most sexually marketed demographic. This highlights that the actual number of advertisements is not as important as what is portrayed within them – at least when analysing degrees of sexuality.



**Figure 4 - Total number of advertisements in each title**

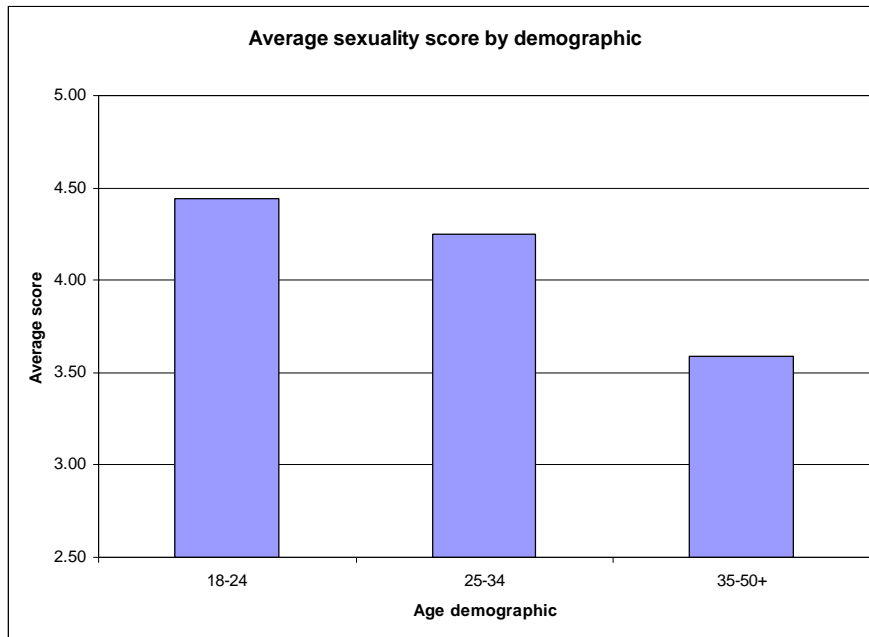
The 25-34 demographic has the highest number of advertisements in each title overall. Figure 4 shows that this demographic contains three of the titles that contain the highest number of magazines. In total, *Glamour* had 819 analysed advertisements despite the fact that only eleven issues were available. In contrast, the lowest number of advertisements was contained in *She*, where in total there were 186 analysed advertisements across all 12 accounted for issues.

### 3.5.4 Which demographic had the highest average sexuality score?

Overall, this study found that the degree of sexuality in women's magazine advertising varies depending on the target age demographic of the publication. Figure 5 shows a definitive highest to lowest trend in the degree of sexuality shown across three age demographics: 18-24, 25-34 and 35-50 plus. These findings reflect the literature such as in Coupland's (2003) ageist product study and Gorman's (2004) study of portrayals of females in *Seventeen* magazine, and were therefore to some extent anticipated. These age specific studies can be referred to in section 2.3.3 of the Literature Review. The youngest

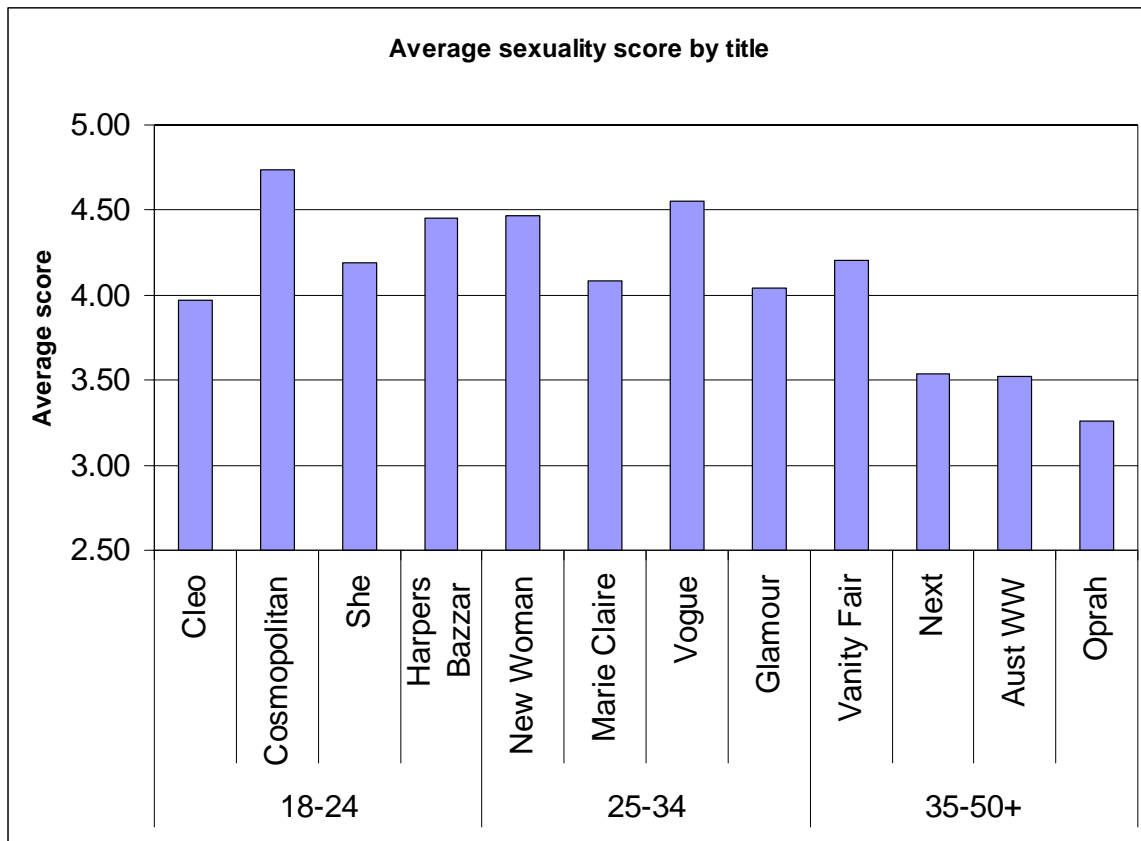
demographic scored the highest sexuality average, closely followed by the middle demographic.

The highest average sexuality score indicates that the youngest demographic is associated with substantially more sexually attributed product categories and is marketed as such through full-page advertising content. In contrast, the oldest demographic is deemed as less sexually marketable reflecting the aforementioned literature.



**Figure 5 - Sexuality by demographic**

### 3.5.5 Overall, which title had the highest average sexuality score?



**Figure 6 - Sexuality by title**

Figure 6 shows that within the youngest demographic, *Cosmopolitan* scored the highest average sexuality score by title overall. This is reflective of the fact that this demographic also has the highest average sexuality score (as seen in figure 1). The three lowest average sexuality scores by title belong to *Next*, *The Australian Women's Weekly* and *O, The Oprah Magazine* which all derive from the oldest and least sexual demographic. Interestingly, the fourth lowest sexuality average title was *Cleo* which comes from the most sexual demographic.

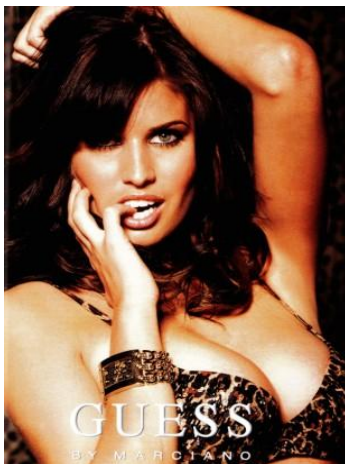
It is interesting to note that this title has such a low sexuality score overall given that the third-equal sexually highest advertisement (Boss Intense Shimmer Fragrance) was found in *Cleo's* February and March issues, as well as numerous other highly sexual advertisements that do not appear in the three titles with lowest sexuality scores.



Apart from *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*, which are both well above the average for their respective demographics and *Cleo* which is well below, the average sexuality scores of each title generally reflect the main sexuality average scores of the demographics overall.

### 3.5.6 What are the ten most sexual advertisements?

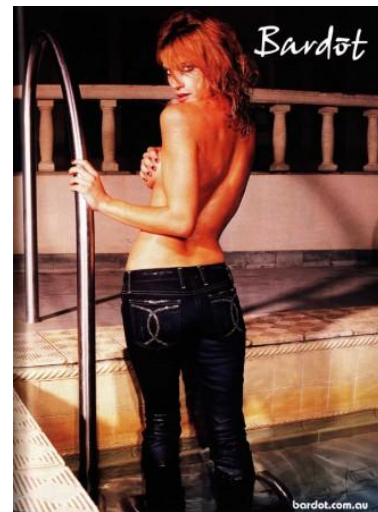
The ‘ten most sexual’ advertisements and their scores are shown below and on the following page.



(a) Rank 1, Score 8.4



(b) Rank 2<sup>nd</sup> equal, Score 8.3



(c) Rank 2<sup>nd</sup> equal, score 8.3



(d) Rank 4<sup>th</sup>, score 8.1



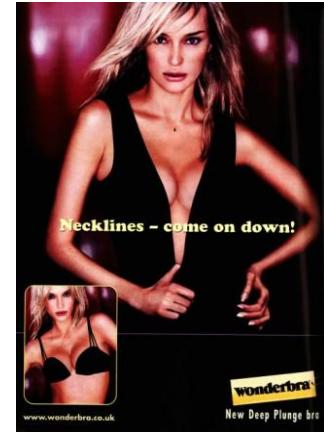
(e) Rank 4<sup>th</sup> equal, score 8.1



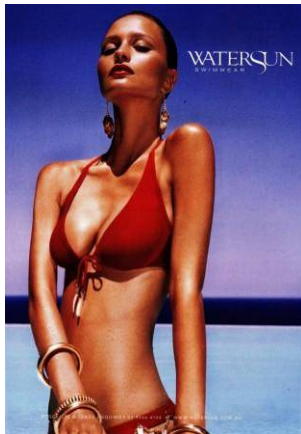
(f) Rank 4<sup>th</sup> equal, score 8.1



(g) Rank 4<sup>th</sup> equal, score 8.1



(h) Rank 5<sup>th</sup> equal, score 8.0



(i) Rank 5<sup>th</sup> equal, score 8.0



(j) Rank 5<sup>th</sup> equal, score 8.0

The ten most sexual advertisements scored very similar results, ranging from 8.0 to 8.4. The most sexual advertisement from the 5198 analysed advertisements was 'Guess by Marciano' clothing scoring 8.4 out of 10. It is shown above as advertisement (a). This advertisement was featured in *Harper's Bazaar* which derives from the youngest and most sexual demographic overall.

It attained the highest rating for a number of reasons. The scoring breakdown in Table 6 reveals how this rating was configured by the nine terms used in the coding schedule. Five out of the nine terms received maximum results producing the most sexual advertisement overall.

**Table 6 –Sexuality scores – Advertisement (a) – Guess by Marciano**

Category	Sexuality score
Colour/text	7
Pose/Sexual Pose	10
Action/Still	10
Facial Expression	10
Clothing/shoes	10
Nakedness	9
Fragmentation	7
Setting/props	3
Feminine Touch	10
<b>Overall average</b>	<b>8.4</b>

Advertisement (f) another ‘*Guess by Marciano*’ clothing advertisement, from the same publication, also appeared in the top ten, at fourth-equal with a rating of 8.1. Interestingly, this was the only advertisement in the top ten that featured a man and a woman.

The most sexual title overall, *Cosmopolitan* (see Figure 6) had two of the ten most sexual advertisements while *Harper’s Bazaar* had four. *Cleo* had two and *She* one. Therefore, all of the four titles in the most sexual age demographic (18-24) had one or more of the most sexual advertisements featured in one or more of its issues. In the second most sexual age demographic (25-34) three of the four titles had one or more of the ten most sexual advertisements.

Two titles – *Vanity Fair* and *Next* – within the oldest and least sexual demographic (35-50 plus) also featured two of the most sexual advertisements. ‘*Boss Intense Shimmer*’ fragrance was the fourth-equal most sexual advertisement and appeared across five different titles.

Five of the ten most sexual advertisements advertised clothing. This is interesting because fragrance scored the highest degree of sexuality in product category and clothing/shoes came third as is discussed later in section 3.5.12. This shows that while fragrance advertisements, overall, use sexuality as an advertising tool, specific clothing advertisements can be very sexualized. This notion is logical, considering that clothing advertisements require the female body to promote the product. With regards to the above

results, this product category is sexualised because the items of clothing advertised – lingerie, bikinis and wet jeans – use nearly-naked models to promote the product. Moreover, it difficult to see how this could be done differently.

Fragrance accounted for only two of the ten most sexual advertisements; make-up and a chocolate biscuit advertisement accounted for the remaining two. ‘*Tim Tams*’, a chocolate biscuit advertisement came third-equal and appeared only once across the entire analysis in one issue of *Cleo*. It was very rare for an advertisement to appear only once across 141 issues. Repetition is after all the key to successful advertising – as ‘the average American sees more than three thousand ads per day’ (Pipher cited in Kilbourne 1999: 12).

Each of the above advertisements all share certain characteristics that are easily identifiable and could be described as sharp, bold and memorable. Below, is an explanation of shared attributes that appear across the top ten advertisements and cover all of the nine terms on the coding schedule that were used to determine the degree of sexuality.

Across each of the ten advertisements the models share similar sexual facial expressions. These range from coy, almost girly expressions (see advertisement (g)) to pouted, come-hither expressions - advertisements (c) and (i) - right through to a facial expression that resembles orgasmic exhilaration as seen in advertisement (b) for chocolate biscuits – maybe chocolate really is better than sex? None of the models in these images are shown smiling which, as discussed in the explanation of the coding schedule, would distract from the degree of sexuality. Two of the models’ expressions are hidden in the darkened depths of the image and are difficult to determine. This mystery tends to aid the degree of sexuality as shown in advertisement (e). In addition, throughout the entire analysis it appeared that the facial expression as described above, was the most widespread sexual characteristic in the majority of the advertisements.

A high level of nakedness is evident in each advertisement. The majority of the models are at least half-naked while three images – advertisements (b), (d) and (g) - show models almost completely naked. Their breasts and private feminine areas have been artistically concealed from view by the positioning of their bodies and use of colour, lighting and props. This works to convey the degrees of sexuality in a tasteful manner. The models are all posed in ‘traditional’ model-like stances (refer to the Pose category in the coding

schedule - section 3.3.1.2) that greatly increases their degree of sexuality and perceived sexual availability.

Feminine Touch comes into play in several of these top ten advertisements. In the images where it is used – every image except advertisement (i) – it is relied on heavily to denote sexiness in the form of feminine delicacy to certain body parts and sexual eagerness. In advertisements (c), (d) and (j) it is used to cover breasts from view which subliminally works to draw attention to them.

The use of ‘Sexual Pose’ as defined in section 3.3.1.2 was encoded for only one of the advertisements in the top ten because only one of the images contains both a man and a woman. Advertisement (f) shows a man posed lower than a woman looking up at her, while partly holding on to her. This ardent attention from the man increases her degree of sexuality and emphasises her even more, drawing the viewer’s attention towards her.

None of the models in these ten most sexual advertisements are portrayed in active or powerful positions. In some of the images the models appear to be in motion, however, the movement has undertones of sexuality. For example, advertisement (c) shows a woman about to climb out of a swimming pool which could point to the fact that she had been swimming and therefore participating in ‘active’ sports. This notion could lead to a substantial decrease in the degree of sexuality overall. However, the model is not wearing a sporty swimming costume and cap, but is instead half-naked and clad in skin-tight wet jeans. Secondly, she is provocatively looking over her shoulder while covering/cradling her naked breast. Of the models wearing clothing, all of them are scantily clad in sexy, low-cut, tight-fitting, clothing that works to emphasize their physical and sexual feminine attributes. The clothes range from bikinis, a very low-cut dress, to wet jeans.

Settings, props and colour have been relied upon extensively to aid the degree of sexuality throughout these advertisements. Colour-wise, this has included extensive use of the colour red, as well as bold colours. The darkening of the background has two notable effects. Firstly, it encloses the model in an enveloping darkness that hides certain facets of her face and body as shown in advertisements (e) and (g). Secondly, a completely stark and dark canvas accentuates the model’s skin tone and emphasises her presence in the image, as shown in advertisement (b).

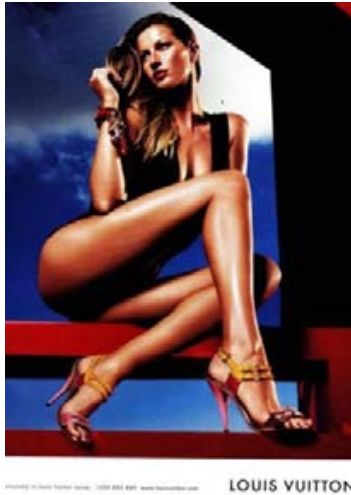
The degree of nakedness across all of the advertisements reveals large amounts of ‘flesh colour’ which is deemed as quite sexual by the coding schedule. Similar to the use of colour, settings and props have also been subtly incorporated into the advertisements as not many of them appear as overly sexual. These include an outdoors, naturalistic water setting (i) a pool (c) a bedroom setting (f), to artistically placed graphics in advertisements (b) and (d). Advertisement (g) attained the highest degree of sexuality in the settings and prop category. It shows a coyly posed naked woman in a life-size martini glass filled with foamy bubbles. This is one of the most sexual uses of settings/props throughout the entire analysis. A case study of this image and other similar images from the same campaign is included at the end of this chapter.

Text has not been used often in this range of advertisements. Only two of the top ten advertisements use direct sexual language to convey and enhance the meaning. Advertisement (h), an advertisement for *‘Wonderbra – the new deep plunge bra’* slightly enhances its meaning through the use of *‘Necklines – come on down’* positioned under a model’s ample bust. Advertisement (b) on the other hand uses text to convey the central, erotic message of the image. The image of the semi-naked model rolling around in orgasmic ecstasy would not be understood without the caption underneath: *‘Chilli Choc Fling. Lust Isn’t A Nibble. It’s A Bite’*. This is interesting because the product being advertised is a chocolate biscuit. Without this text the image would be completely out of context with the product - the text used ties in the message with the image used.

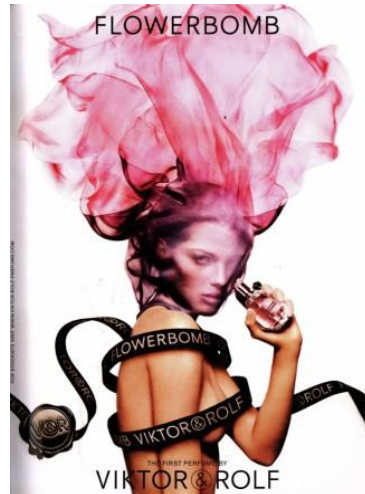
Lastly, fragmentation has not been used to its full extent in the ten most sexual advertisements. In other words, the models’ bodies have not been dismembered as is possible with fragmentation and which has been seen used repeatedly by advertisers throughout this analysis. (Refer to section 3.3.1.7 of coding schedule for examples of fragmentation.) Instead, the most that fragmentation was used can be seen in advertisement (e). Here, only part of the model’s face and body can be seen, specifically, half her face, neck and breast/cleavage area and hand. Above all, the model’s unrecognisable facial features result in very high degrees of sexuality in this category. Advertisements (a) and (d) are also examples of fragmentation but to a lesser extent. Here the models’ faces are clearly defined and the image consists of a composition that incorporates the top of their heads through to just below the breast area.



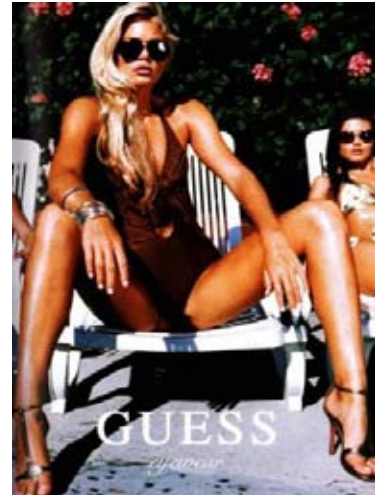
Some advertisements just missed out on being in the top ten with a score of 7.9. This is still an exceptionally high degree of sexuality and means that that even though the degrees of sexuality were high they did not score quite as well across each of the nine categories. Three examples are shown below including another *Guess* advertisement, advertisement (m).



(k)



(l)



(m)

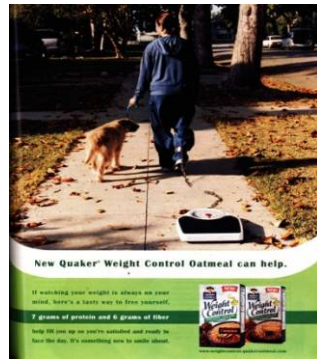
These advertisements share three characteristics: fierce ‘come-hither’ facial expressions, high levels of nakedness and the use of bold colours. Advertisements (k) and (m) focus on long legs which are traditionally considered sexual and attractive body parts.

### 3.5.7 Overall, which advertisements in the analysis were the least sexual?

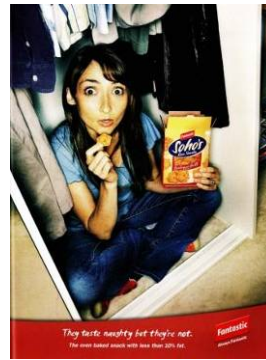
A number of advertisements scored 0.0 which deemed them as being the least sexual. Interestingly, *Oprah Magazine*, which had the lowest average sexuality score of all the titles, had only one advertisement that scored 0.0. In contrast, *Cosmopolitan*, which had the highest average sexuality rating of all titles, featured a number of advertisements that scored 0.0. The remainder and vast majority of these advertisements with a score of 0.0 appeared in *The Australian Women's Weekly* and *Next* which coincides with the demographic that these titles derive from as being the least sexual overall. A few of the advertisements that scored 0.0 are featured on the following page.



(a)



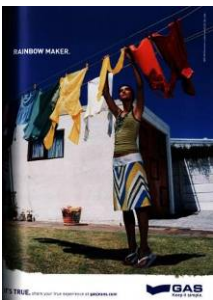
(b)



(c)



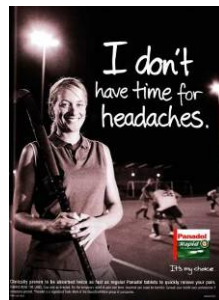
(d)



(e)



(f)



(g)



(h)

There is no definitive set of attributes that appear across all of the advertisements to formulate a 0.0 rating criteria. However, most of the advertisements share some similar characteristics: they appear as drab, unmemorable advertisements

From the eight selected advertisements above that rated 0.0, over half of these advertise products that can be consumed such as breakfast cereal, oatmeal and headache pills.

Three of these advertisements share the theme of weight loss. Advertisement (a) is promoting ‘Carb Options’ – a lower-carb substitute for the potato. It shows a terrified woman peeping out from underneath her bedclothes at a lone, humble, potato, while the text proclaims “No need to hide from carbs”. Advertisement (b), meanwhile, shows the back of a frumpily dressed woman taking her dog for a walk all the while dragging scales behind her. The text reads: “New Quaker Weight Control Oatmeal can help’. This insinuates that her body weight is an issue and is ‘weighing’ her down per se. Advertisement (c) shows an already thin, angular woman hiding in her wardrobe caught in the act of indulging in Soho crackers. The caption, ‘They taste naughty but they’re not’, emotively ignites the beginnings of guilt but the finer print informs the reader that they contain ‘less than 10% fat’ which rectifies the situation.



In this selection of advertisements the ‘thin ideal’ models that have dominated the entire range of advertisements in the analysis are not present. However, the subliminal message remains the same. The advertiser is not providing women with images that they may aspire to or even envy, but instead with more realistic portrayals of how women look like when they are seeking the ‘thin ideal’ by consuming the advertised weight-loss products. These weight-loss products replace the usual models as the ‘tool’ or the ‘promise’ to achieving the unachievable look that is dominating the majority of the advertising images in the remainder of the magazine. ‘We are led via ads to expect transformation via products’ (Pipher cited in Kilbourne 1999: 13) and vice-versa.

Two of the advertisements that rated 0.0 portray women in traditional ‘in the home’ roles. In this analysis of over 5000 advertisements, less than 50 represented woman in domestic roles or settings. Advertisement (d) for Nutri-Grain cereal shows a woman as a mother-type-figure vacuuming under a couch for her teenage sons. Advertisement (e) simply shows a woman hanging up laundry in her back-yard. Both come from *The Australian Women’s Weekly* magazine. As this magazine is in the oldest age demographic, it would seem that the products and the depiction of women in relation to these products seem age and demographic appropriate – even if stereotypically so. This research has found that this stereotypical representation is not the dominant portrayal of women overall. This is in direct contrast to Courtney and Lockeretz’s (1979) longitude study where ‘women were rarely shown in out-of-home working roles’. This was summarised in 2.3.2 of the Literature Review. These findings reveal that the portrayal of women in this genre of women’s magazine advertising have changed in the past two decades.

The remaining advertisements shown above are for sanitary products, pain relief pills, and sports shoes – all functional products.

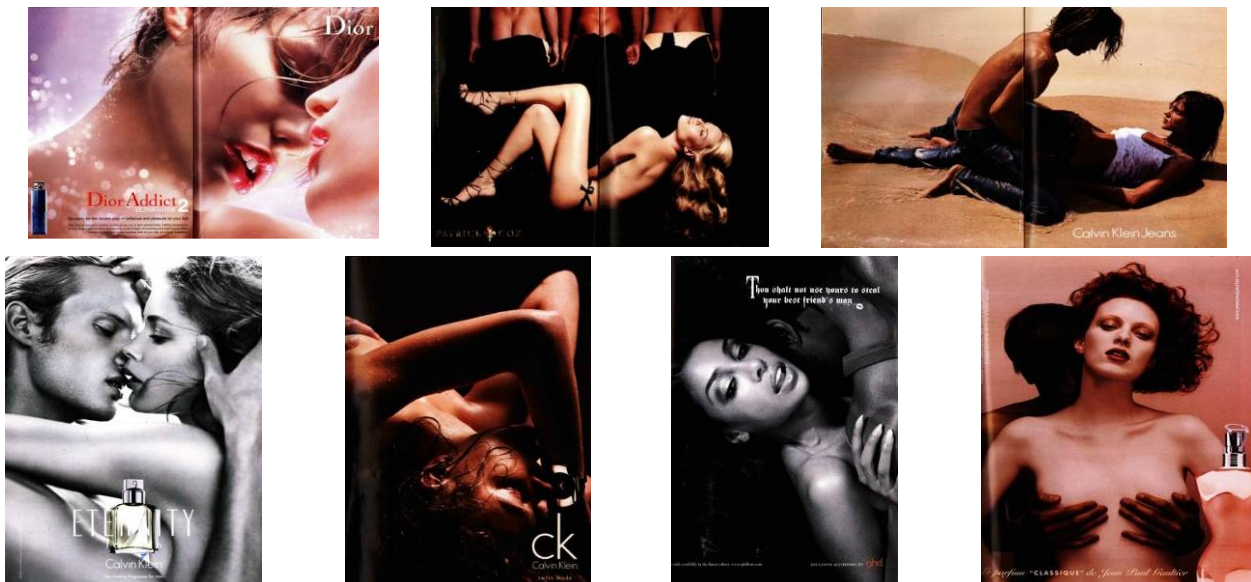
The choice of images and graphics used in these advertisements for the most part do not render them as exciting or even memorable which is the point and essence of advertising. However, this brings to light that not all advertisements can use sexuality as selling a selling tool or point of difference. This approach would create more sameness than already exists in the world of women’s magazine advertising – tall thin models who reflect only a small portion of the population.

From the above examples it can be seen that the clichéd notion of ‘sex sells’ is not appropriate for all product advertisements.

### 3.5.8 Were there any advertisements that scored lower than expected?

The results revealed that some of the advertisements that initially appeared as the most sexual to the researcher did not receive the highest degrees of sexuality in terms of the coding schedule. The majority of these images portray people in the ‘pose/sexual pose’ category but concentrating on the latter. Sexual pose often portrays people in varying degrees of sexual intimacy and this is why these were assumed to be the most sexual prior to the analysis.

The coding schedule determined the degree of sexuality of each advertisement and the results are a fair representation of most of the 5,198 advertisements analysed. However, there are a small number of advertisements – 15 to 30 – that appear extremely sexual due to the ‘sexual pose’ category but attained a low degree of sexuality when compared with the top ten most sexual images. This is due to the fact that these advertisements did not score well across all nine categories. Below are examples of such advertisements.



While the initial impression may be of a highly sexual advertisement, these advertisements scored a 5.0 to a 7.5. This is a high score, but not enough to reach the top

ten. The main reason for this seemingly low score is due to the categories of the coding schedule which were unable to adequately measure the degree of sexuality of such images.

‘Pose and Sexual Pose’ are classified as the same category and can therefore receive only a maximum of ten out of ten. As discussed in section 3.3.1.2 these two categories were merged because very few advertisements in the analysis were portrayed in this way – picturing a man and a woman – and were not representative of the degree of sexuality of women in magazine advertising overall which is the purpose of this analysis. The above images focus on men and women in intimate situations. The extensive use of ‘sexual pose’ is what above all else determines the high degree of sexuality in these images.

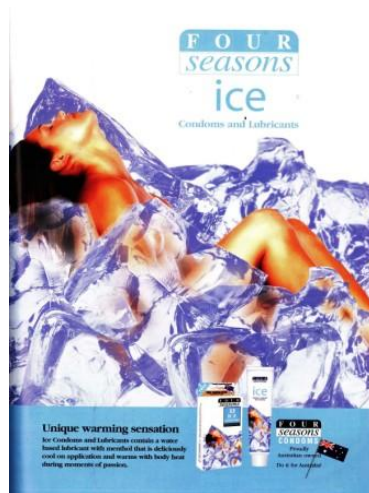
These images all share certain attributes. They all slightly resemble soft-porn: half-naked men and women partaking in numerous sexual acts and are set in naturalistic, semi-dark or fantasy-style settings. However, the image of ‘woman-alone’ seems to have developed as the central-type of advertisement analysed in this study and this is reflected in the core results from the coding schedule. The overall consistent and dominant use of this theme in the advertising images – woman alone – overrides the importance of the ‘sexual pose’ in this analysis. Perhaps if images featuring men and women were more prevalent throughout then the coding schedule would have been restructured to incorporate them. As such, they remain as anomalies within this analysis and are further explained in the limitations section.

These advertisements appear in the youngest and middle demographics which on the one hand, seems appropriate because it can be assumed that these two demographics are stereotypically most sexually active. On the other hand, this sort of exposure to the youngest demographic might not be wholly appropriate especially for those on the younger end of the spectrum who may not have had this type of exposure previously. Perhaps these advertisements would be best suited in publications aimed at the oldest and therefore most experienced demographic. However, only one of these advertisements for ‘Calvin Klein Jeans’ is featured in the oldest demographic and derives from *Vanity Fair*. This is an interesting anomaly because this specific advertisement scored an above average 6.4 on the sexuality scale and yet it is featured in the least sexual demographic of all.

It is also interesting to note advertisements featuring products distinctly related to sex such as condoms did not score very high in terms of the degree of sexuality rating.



(a)



(b)



(c)

Moreover, from the advertisements shown above it can be seen that the women within the advertisements are portrayed in the throws of sexual ecstasy. This can especially be seen in advertisement (a). The low degree of sexuality rating can be attributed to the categories of the coding schedule which were unable to adequately measure the degree of sexuality of such images.

### 3.5.9 Did a brand stand out as more sexual than others overall?

Advertising campaigns rely on the notion of branding which equate lifeless products with values and ideals. Davidson summarises the concept of the brand;

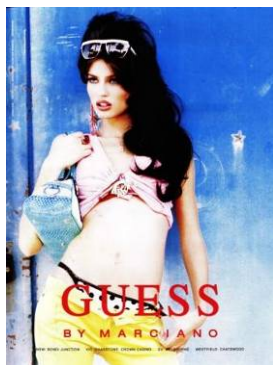
‘Brands are products that are famous. We have crystallised in our minds why they should be valued. We know them, even those we never buy, nor intend to buy...famous products better than just ordinary ones...and it is in the brand that consumerism and culture meet. The mechanisms of pleasure, fantasy, our different selves, our social worlds and social status all colour and texture the larger sense that turns products into brands...the one thing a brand can never be is just a box on a shelf’ (1992: 25-26).

The brand with the most sexual advertisements was ‘*Guess*’ clothing and eyewear. From the branding aspect it promoted much more than just the product – the campaign

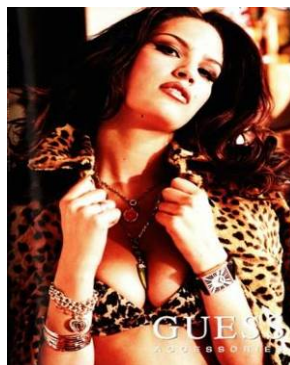
conveyed a sexualised portrayal of glamorous women who, due to their sexuality are admired and wanted by men. This brand consistently received high degrees of sexuality scores throughout all of its advertising campaign. The advertisements appeared in an array of titles throughout the analysis, with many in *Vanity Fair* which derives from the oldest and least sexual age demographic as discussed in section 3.5.4.

A *Guess* advertisement rated as the most sexual in this analysis overall scoring 8.4. Another *Guess* advertisement featuring a man and a woman rated fourth-equal. The other *Guess* advertisements featured throughout the analysis did not score less than 7.0 out of 10 which is an exceptionally high degree of sexuality rating for an entire brand. Moreover, the *Guess* advertisement for eyewear, advertisement (d) below, received a 7.9 degree of sexuality rating and was very close to being included in the top ten most sexual advertisements the lowest rating of which was 8.0.

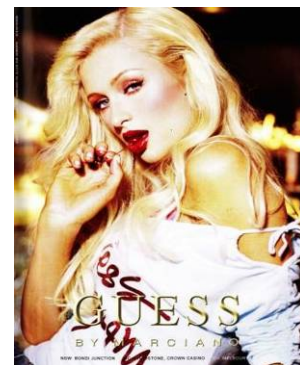
All of the *Guess* advertisements from this campaign are shown below and on the following page.



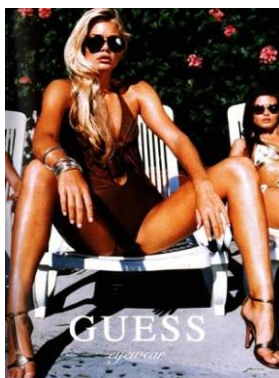
(a)



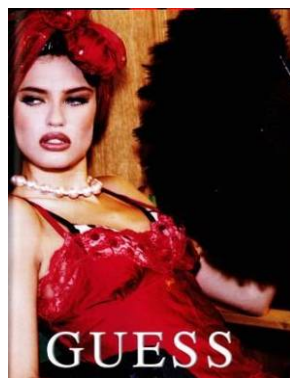
(b)



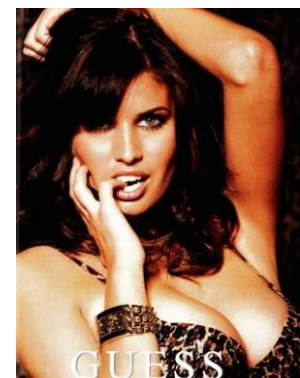
(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)





(g)



(h)

The women are all dressed in sexy, tight and revealing clothing. Their faces portray pouted ‘come-hither’ expressions and they are posed in a sexual manner. ‘Feminine Touch’ is also widely used. The colour, settings and props also greatly add to the degree of sexuality. These common factors contribute to this brand’s rating as the most sexual overall in this analysis, as well as giving a consistent and recognisable theme to all the advertisements in the campaign.

Moreover, Tom Reichert, author of *The Erotic History of Advertising*, identified Guess as one of the advertising campaigns that ‘set the bar for provocative nudity and sexual fire’ (2003: 13) through the use of gorgeous women. His words have been reflected in this analysis where it did indeed ‘set the bar’ as the most sexual brand.

### 3.5.10 Do any advertisements appear across all four titles in more than one demographic?

This section investigates advertisements that appear across all four titles in each demographic. This is interesting to investigate to see if advertisers use similar techniques for advertisements aimed at three different age demographics.

#### 3.5.10.1 Advertisement that appeared across all demographics



The advertisement above for 'Euphoria' fragrance was the only one that appeared across all three demographics. However, it did not appear across all twelve titles. It was found in nine out of the twelve titles across the demographics – *Cleo*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *New Woman*, *Marie Claire*, *Glamour*, *Vanity Fair*, *Next* and *The Australian Women's Weekly*. This is a generic advertisement for fragrance and tends to suit most of the age demographics. It received a just above-average degree of sexuality rating.

### 3.5.10.2 Youngest demographic (18 – 24)



(a)



(b)



(c)

In the youngest demographic (18-24) three advertisements appeared across all four titles – *Cleo*, *Cosmopolitan*, *She* and *Harper's Bazaar*. These advertisements are two versions of the advertisement for L'Oréal Happy-derm, a face wash cleanser (advertisements (a) and (b)), and L'Oréal Glam Shine Cream lipstick (advertisement (c)). Interestingly both of these products derive from the same brand – L'Oréal. The two versions of the Happy-derm cleanser advertisement appear across all of the titles and sometimes both versions are included in an issue, one right after the other. A third version did not appear across all titles in this demographic.

It is interesting to note that in both of these versions the model is shown smiling. This facial expression is considered to be a rarity because in contemporary advertising and certainly throughout this analysis the models have very rarely been shown smiling as was discussed in section 3.3.1.4 of the coding schedule.

'There is every indication that magazines and newspapers actively invite more smiling models, but are repulsed by a dominant belief on the part of the models and the photographers as to what constitutes attractiveness' (Coward 1984: 58). A former editor of *Cosmopolitan* believes that it would be much better if the models did smile, but they refuse to (ibid). Speculatively, then, perhaps the youngest demographic is perceived and therefore portrayed as more carefree and a smile conveys this sense of freedom far better than a scowl – no matter how sexy. Most probably however, the model is smiling to try and convey excitement and pleasure into the ritual of cleansing.

In both advertisements fragmentation is used, with the model's face or partial aspects of the model's face used to promote the product. These products fall into the overall 'beauty' category in the coding schedule. This may seem a questionable categorisation for

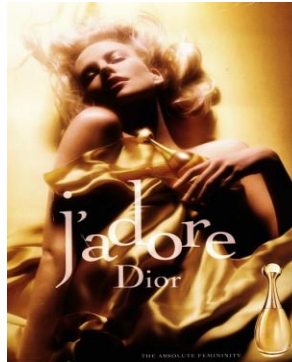


the Happy-derm face wash since it is deemed to be more of a hygienic ritual rather than a beautifying one. However, the act of cleansing is similar to that of applying make-up because both of these rituals produce the same result: a more attractive and therefore sexually desirable individual (refer to the product category section in the coding schedule).

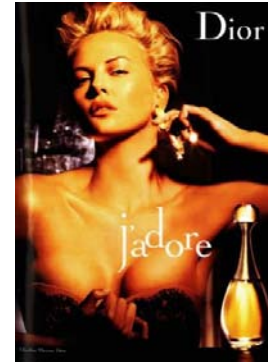
### 3.5.10.3 Middle Demographic (25 – 34)



(a)



(b)



(c)

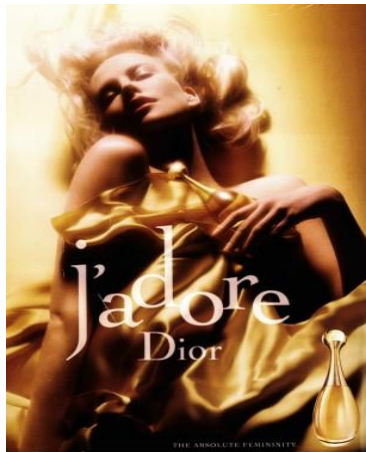
In the middle demographic (25-34) two advertisements also appeared across all four titles – *New Woman*, *Vogue*, *Marie Claire* and *Glamour*. The advertisements are L'Oréal Glam Shine crème lipstick (advertisement (a)) and two versions of similar advertisements for Dior j'adore fragrance - (b) and (c). Interestingly, the L'Oréal Glam Shine Cream lipstick also appeared in all titles in the youngest demographic. However, a lipstick is viewed as a generic product used by women of all ages so the advertisement functions equally well in both demographics. Moreover, this advertisement is not classified as particularly sexual.

The two Dior advertisements used similar colour palettes and the same product bottle but this is where the similarities end. Advertisement (c) is celebrity endorsed and portrays quite an sexual image due to the amount of, and type of nakedness that is revealed; the upper half of Charlize Theron's breasts. The use of feminine touch draws the viewer's gaze to this area. Theron's slightly parted, pouted lips, narrowed eyes and tilted head represent a typically sexual expression and greatly increase the degree of sexuality overall. The other Dior j'adore advertisement (b) is not as sexual; however, it too has some sexual significance. Settings and props come into play here: the sheer silky yellow sheet makes it appear as if the model is in bed or a similar setting. The model's sexually oblivious facial expression works in with the setting. Both advertisements' sexual natures

tie in well with this demographic because it is assumed that the middle age group is neither too young nor too old to grasp the advertisers' message. Here, the use of sexuality works as an innovative tool to inject a point of difference into a generic product.

#### **3.5.10.4 Oldest demographic (34 – 50+)**

In the oldest demographic (34-50 plus) only one advertisement appeared across all four titles – *Next*, *Vanity Fair*, *The Australian Women's Weekly* and *O, The Oprah Magazine*. It is the same Dior j'adore fragrance that appears in the middle demographic.



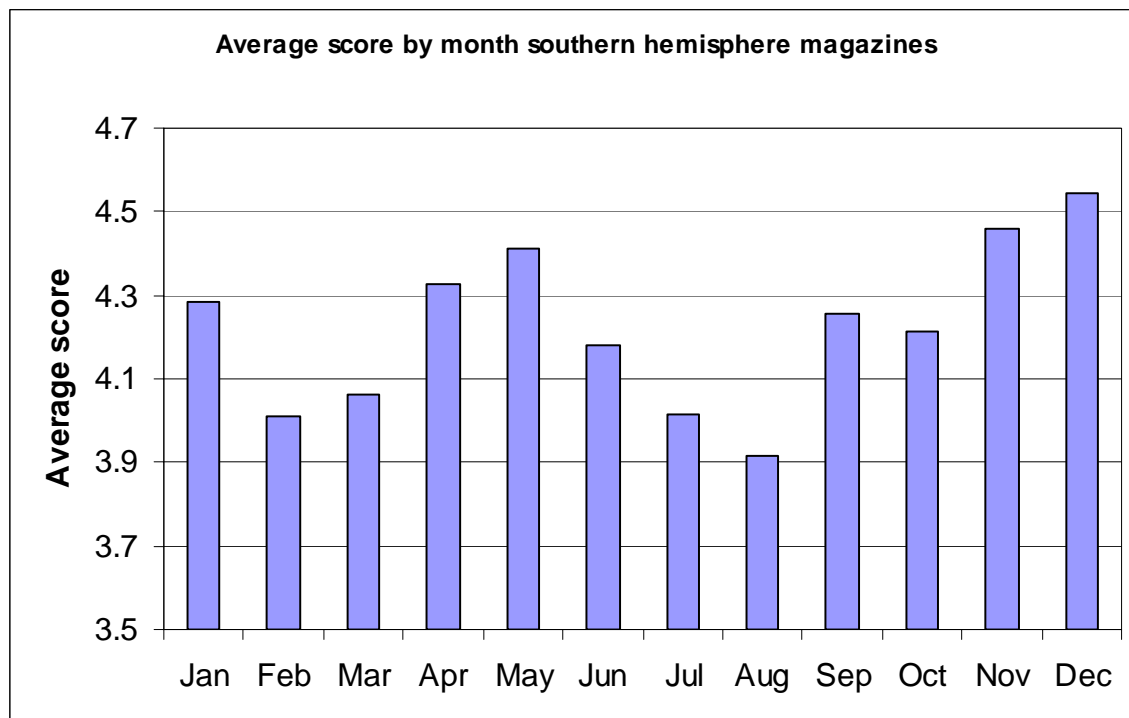
#### **3.5.10.5 Summary**

Some advertisements appeared across the demographics. L'Oreal Glam Shine Cream lipstick featured in the youngest and middle demographics while Dior j'adore fragrance featured in the middle and oldest demographics. The advertisement for *Euphoria* fragrance featured in all three demographics. This overlapping does not reveal anything new about the demographics because both lipstick and fragrance are generic products that are used by and aimed at women of all ages. However, in the youngest demographic this is not the case because L'Oreal Happyderm Cleanser appears across all of the titles which is age-appropriate for teenagers and young women who are generally more prone to skin breakouts than older women. 'This is very common during adolescence and not unknown thereafter' (Cooke 1997: 137).

The three advertisements in the middle and older demographics contain differing degrees and aspects of sexuality. Considering the difficulties involved in relentlessly promoting the same types of products, the level of sexuality used has added an innovative slant to

these otherwise dull products which overall suit the age demographics in which they are published.

### 3.5.11 Did the degree of sexuality vary according to the month or season?



**Figure 7 - Sexuality score by month**

By performing a year-long analysis it was possible to see how the degree of sexuality fluctuates over different months and seasons. Figure 7 above shows the average sexuality score of magazines by month. Magazines from the Northern Hemisphere – *O The Oprah Magazine*, *Glamour* and *Vanity Fair* – have been excluded because the results would be skewed by seasonal variations.

Fashion trends usually peak in the summer months in regards to the degree of sexiness shown in the clothing designs. The warmer season brings an influx of bikinis, mini-skirts and flowing, transparent fabrics normally tend to grace the fashion scene and are thus portrayed in woman's magazine advertisements. November and December were the 'sexiest' months because these months often feature new season fashion ranges for the upcoming hot summer months.

April and May were the next sexiest months, which is odd considering that it is a cold time of year with winter fast approaching. This result may have occurred for varying reasons such as editorial decisions; more sexy and revealing winter fashion designs; a change in advertising products and campaigns; a cold summer. In contrast, the core winter months have predictably lower degrees of sexuality.

### 3.5.12 Which product category is most sexual?

The first task of advertising is that of differentiation, since competing products are often very similar. Sexuality is used as one such method to differentiate products from one another. Reichert and Carpenter (2004) found that specific products are marketed in a more sexual manner.

According to Kang (2005) beauty and fragrance products are advertised in a more sexual manner than other products. This study found similar results as shown in Figure 8. Fragrance products rated as the overall most sexual product category, beauty products second, and shoes and clothing third.

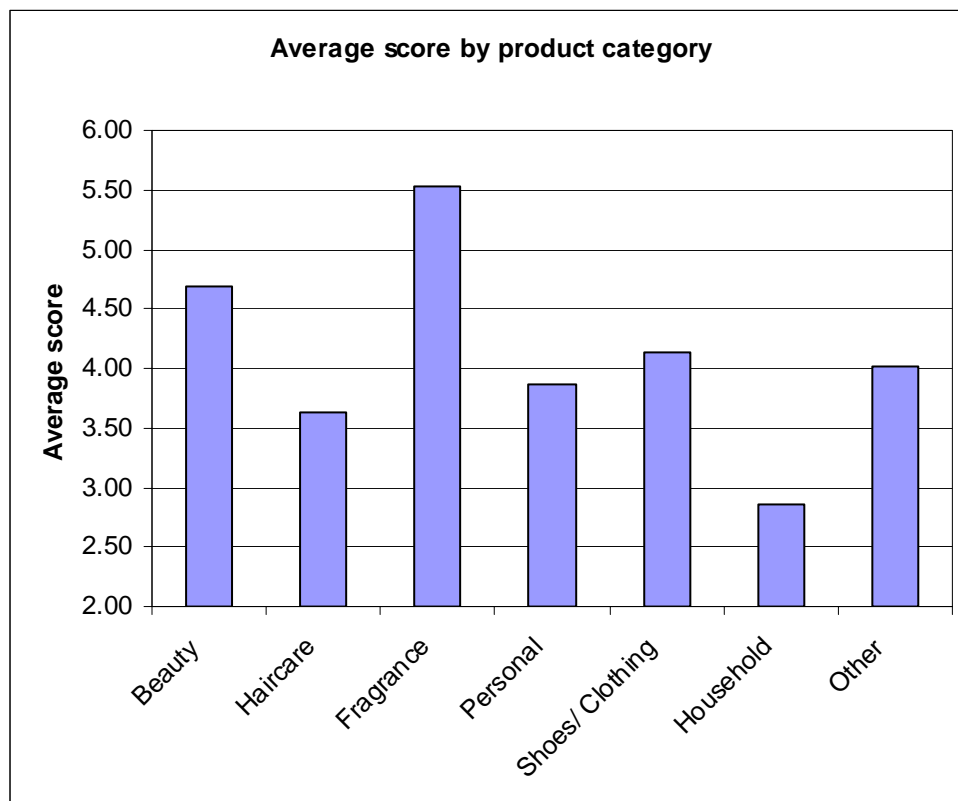


Figure 8 - Sexuality score by product category

It is interesting to note that the fragrance category was not only most sexual overall, but was most sexual in every demographic as shown below in Figure 9. In fact, for every demographic the product categories ranked in the same order in terms of use of sexuality by product category.

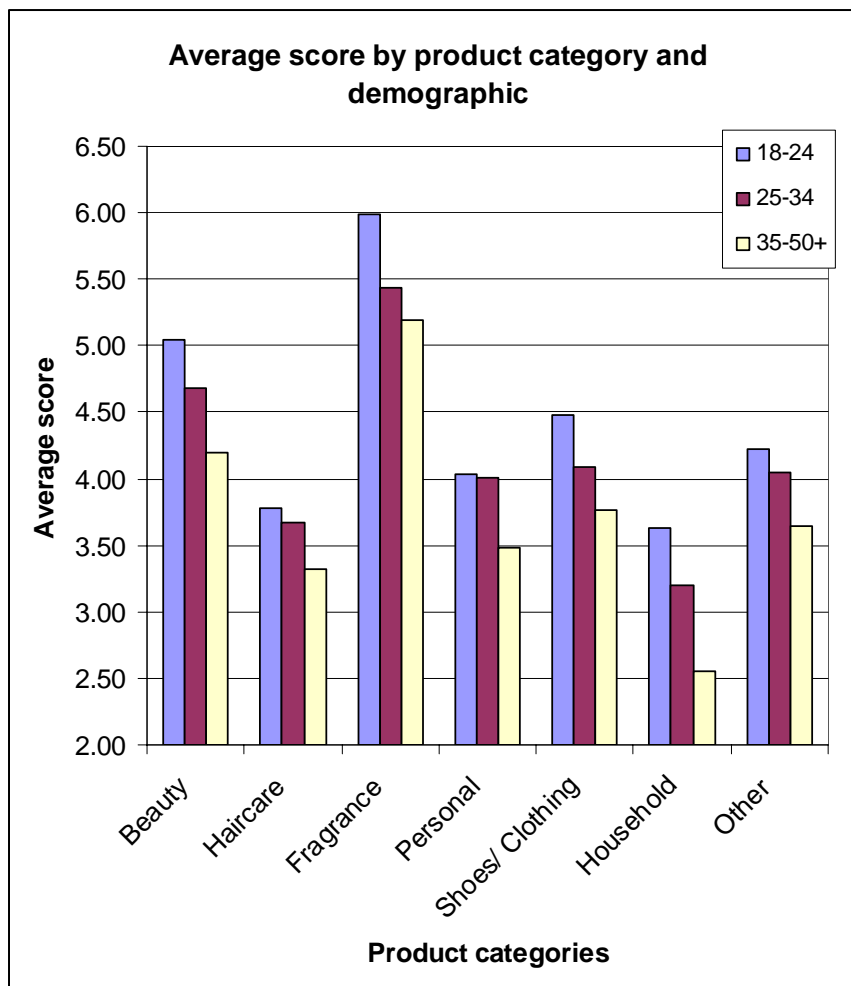


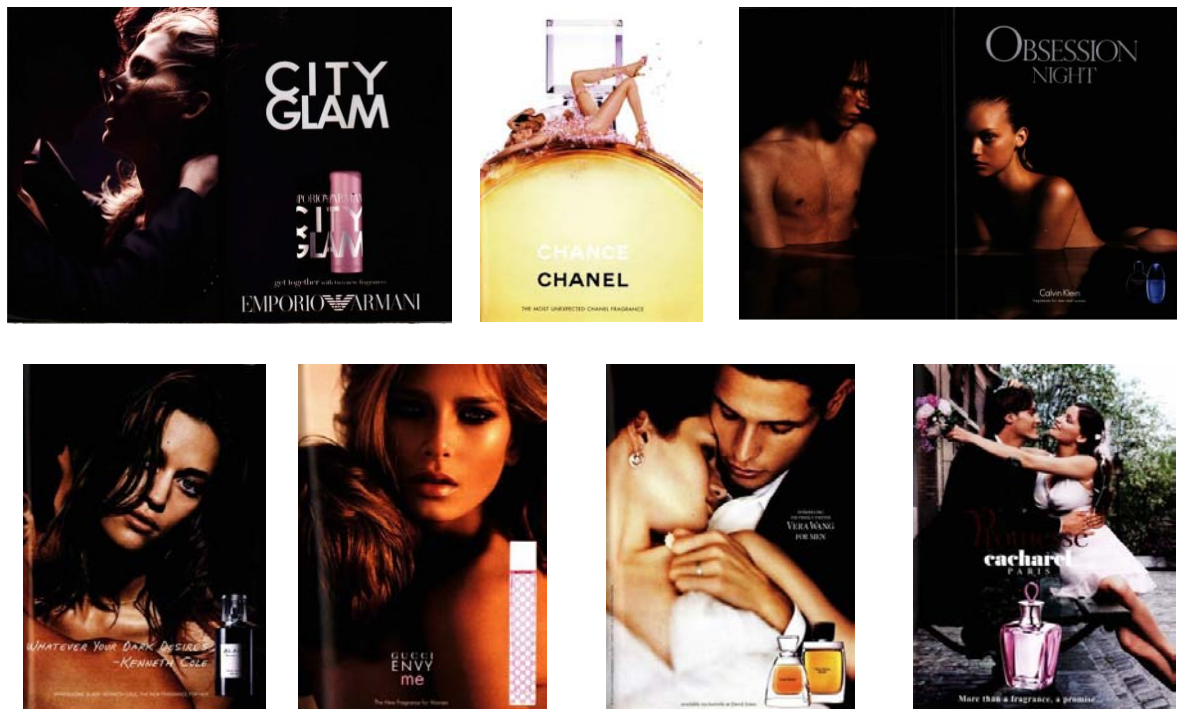
Figure 9 - Sexuality by product category and demographic

### 3.5.12.1 Fragrance advertising – the most sexual product category

In fragrance advertisements, which had the highest degree of sexuality, a partially naked human body is often used to attract attention. It is impossible to portray a fragrance without the scent itself; therefore the representation of sex and differing aspects of sexuality are used to portray the promise rather than the product. Clearly, advertisers perceive this to be a successful marketing tool due to its repetitive and continuous use in advertising campaigns. According to Reichert and Carpenter (2004):

‘certain product marketers utilize a higher proportion of sexual appeals (e.g., beauty, fashion, fragrance, alcohol, tobacco) than other marketers because of the nature of the product and the relevance of sex to product benefits (e.g., mate attraction).’

In fragrance advertising, two people – usually a man and a woman – are often coupled together to portray a romantic fantasy or at other times a sexually explicit interlude. These portrayals have nothing to do with the advertised product however their bodies are used to attract attention. Some examples illustrating these points are shown below.

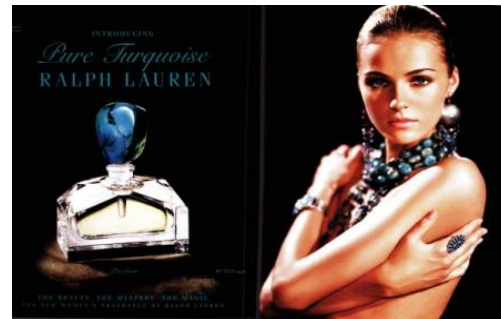
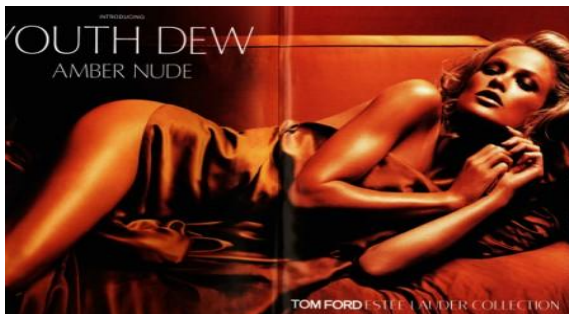
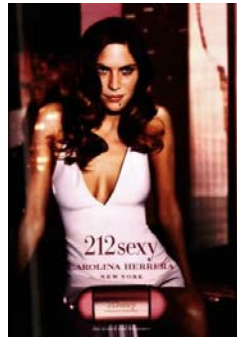
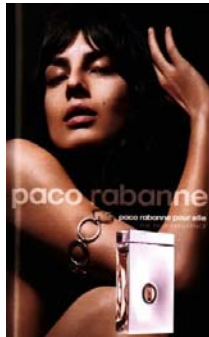


The above images are prime examples of advertisements that utilise differing degrees of sexuality to create innovative copy with just a hint of mystery. These types of advertisements may perhaps provoke a second glance. This is after all the essence of advertising – a mere hint of interest from the consumer is the starting point of a successful campaign.

Not all fragrance advertisements rely solely on a man and a woman to attract attention. Often, scantily-clad and suggestively posed women appear in fragrance advertisements that portray a definitive degree of sexuality – at times more so than the male/female advertisements. It is interesting to note that only two of the top ten most sexual advertisements were fragrance advertisements featuring women alone (as discussed in



section 3.5.6). All of the advertisements shown below scored an above-average to exceptionally high degree of sexuality and are just a small selection of such advertisements from within this study.



This study has determined that sexuality is frequently used within fragrance advertising to sell products. As has been seen in the examples provided; sexuality has been utilised subtly in some instances and more explicitly in others.

### **3.5.12.2 Discussion of sexuality by product category**

Household products such as white-ware, detergents and furniture, have been traditionally seen as everyday products and are advertised with little or no degree of sexuality applied to these advertising campaigns. In line with this, household products attained the lowest degree of sexuality in their advertising across each and every one of the demographics.

Looking at the above results, it would appear that advertisements for products such as fragrance and beauty which are usually associated with some sort of unachievable promise, or set in an idealistic or romantic dream world, attain the highest degrees of sexuality. In contrast, household products are generally advertised as they are; simple and realistic. The product's functionality outweighs any imaginary world. Instead, technical, factual and above all required information tends to fill the copy.

There is a primary difference between these two categories; ‘wants’ versus ‘needs’. An individual ‘wants’ to look and smell beautiful, they do not ‘need’ this – no matter what advertising copy stipulates, this is not an actual need. A woman does not need a different colour lipstick for every day of the week, nor does she need to smell like Cherry Blossoms on the Monday and Vanilla Kisses on the Tuesday. However; there is a need for a washing machine, pots and pans and a bed.

It very quickly becomes apparent why some advertisers need to inject degrees of sexuality throughout their advertising campaigns and other do not – or at least not to the same extent. As has been seen so far, the vast majority of advertisements with a female model depict varying degrees of sexuality because most aspects in an advertisement can be perceived in a sexualized way. For the most part, functional products sell themselves out of need – advertising just gives them a nudge in the right direction. In contrast, products that are applied to the body due to vanity or insecurity need to be marketed in an innovative, attention-grabbing way. What better way than through the use of the sexualized body? Also, it makes common sense to market products that are intended for the body through the body. It would be somewhat odd if this wasn’t the case. Fragrance, beauty and clothing advertisers have naturally utilized the female form in their advertisements.



From the images above, it can be argued that too high degrees of sexuality have been incorporated into the image and this does not tie in directly with the product. Moreover, at times this makes the meaning of the advertisement as well as the product itself appear ambiguous, when a highly sexualized body dominates the advertisement. However, at least these products are made to be used and applied directly to the body. Feminists would most probably be outraged if half-naked models were used to promote an array of household appliances in the same way that they promote fragrance in women’s general interest and fashion magazines because these products are not intended for the body.



Advertisers long ago discovered that a woman's body is a beautiful canvas on which to promote products. According to Reichert;

‘Advertiser's and marketers have used sex in their promotional efforts since the early days of modern advertising...ads for the 1880s and early 1900s are just as sexually suggestive and scintillating as present-day advertising’ (2003: 10).

This coupled with an idealistic dream world, filled with unattainable promises equates to the campaign strategy that is currently being used in contemporary advertising across women's magazines in different demographics. Therefore, it would appear from this discussion and analysis that degrees of sexuality do vary significantly between product categories and do usually tend to correlate with the advertised products.

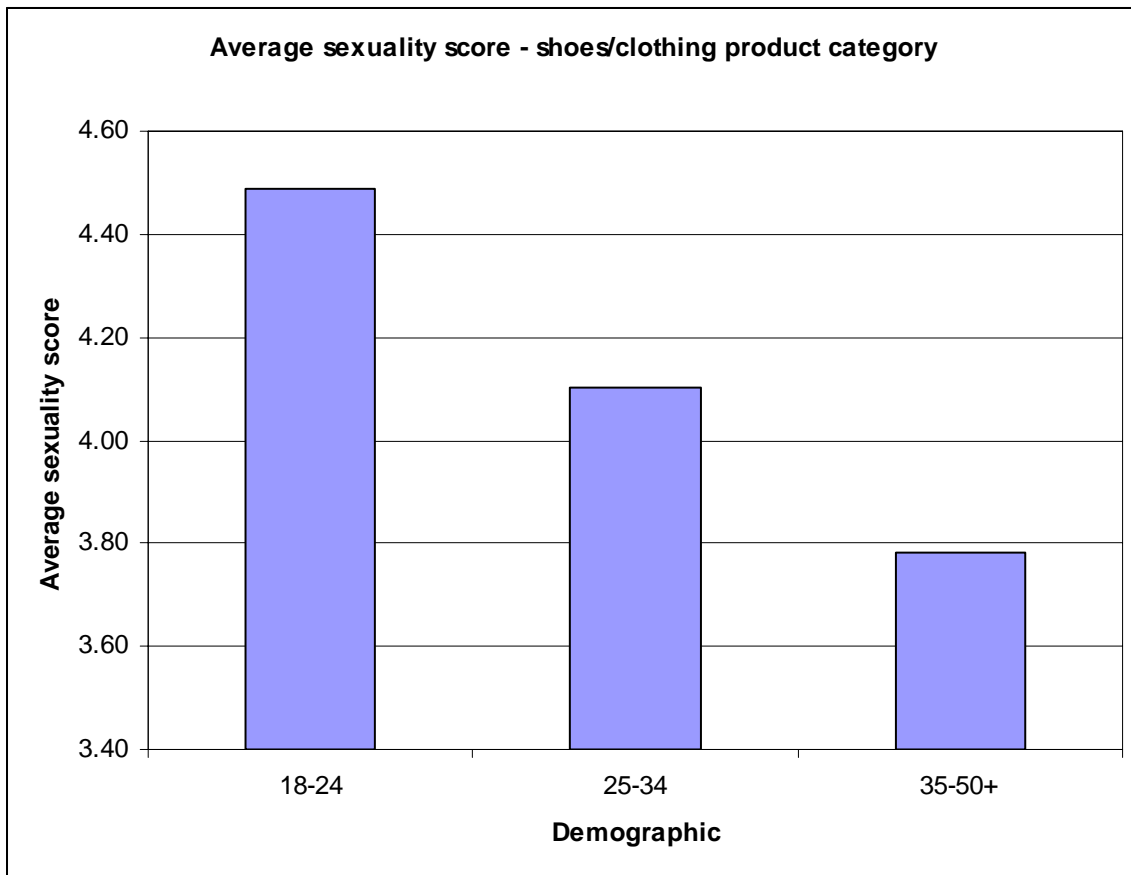
Varying degrees of sexuality are used as tools to create attractive, eye-catching advertisements. For the most part has been done in an innovative manner that appears product appropriate. Throughout this entire analysis of 5,198 advertisements no images of women were shown draped half-naked over unrelated body products such as egg beaters, vacuum cleaners or sewing machines.

### **3.5.13 Case Studies**

The two case studies below show how sexuality is used as a key tool in advertising.

#### **3.5.13.1 Case Study 1 – Shoes and Clothing**

According to Linder (2004) fashion images featured in advertisements tended to be more sexualized than not. This notion was reflected in this analysis. Figure 8 showed that the shoes and clothing category rated as the third most sexual product category overall. It was also shown in Figure 9 that it was the third most sexual product category in each demographic.

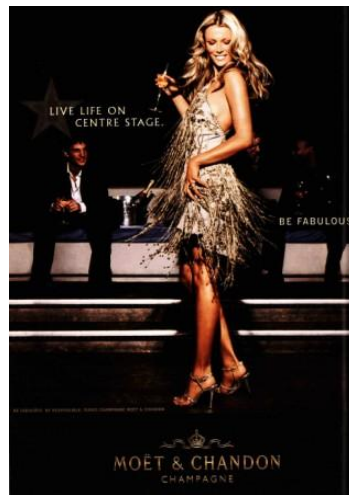
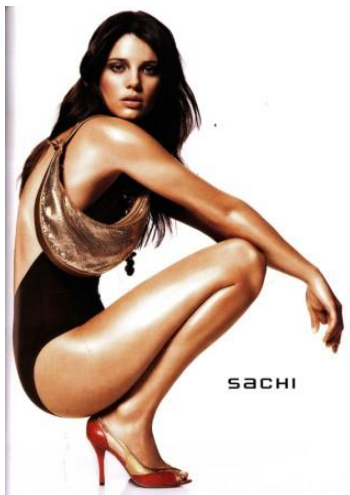
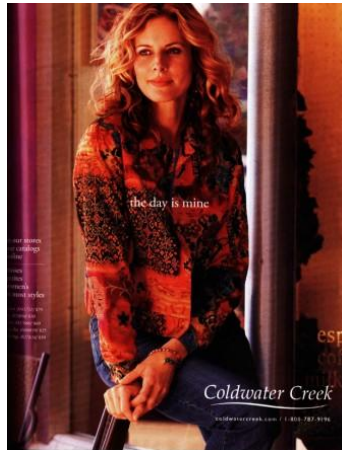


**Figure 10 - Average sexuality score - shoes and clothing product category**

The average sexuality score for products in the shoes and clothing section across the three demographics is shown in Figure 10 above. It can be seen that the degree of sexuality used when advertising shoes and clothing is much higher in the youngest (18-24) demographic than in the oldest (35-50+) demographic.

This result may be indicative of the age demographic of the magazines. For example, due to the lack of sexuality used in shoes and clothing advertisements featured in the oldest demographic, it suggests that perhaps practicality of clothes, rather than sexuality and femininity, are the key focus in their advertisements. In respect to this product category, this approach desexualises older women, while both the youngest and middle demographics promote the degree of sexuality in their range of advertisements for shoes and clothes. Thus, 'the consumer envies not only the glamorous model in an advertisement but herself as she will be in the future after having purchased the product advertised' (McCracken 1993: 36). However, the older woman reader will for the most part not envy the models pictured because they efface her sexuality and femininity through the clothing pictured. The images on the following page show advertisements

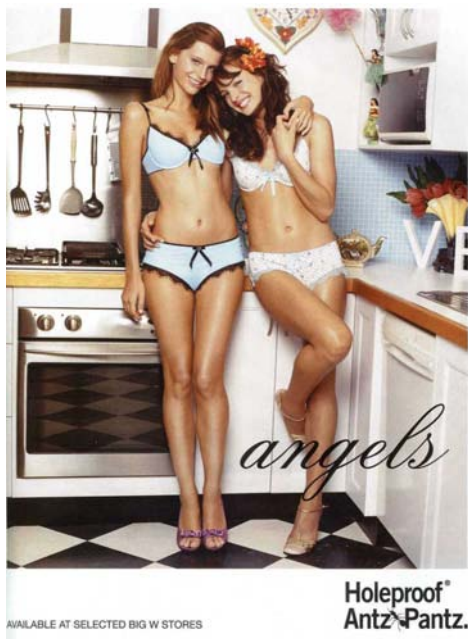
featuring shoes and clothing. Some derive from the youngest demographic while others from the oldest. It is easy to determine which advertisement derives from which demographic.



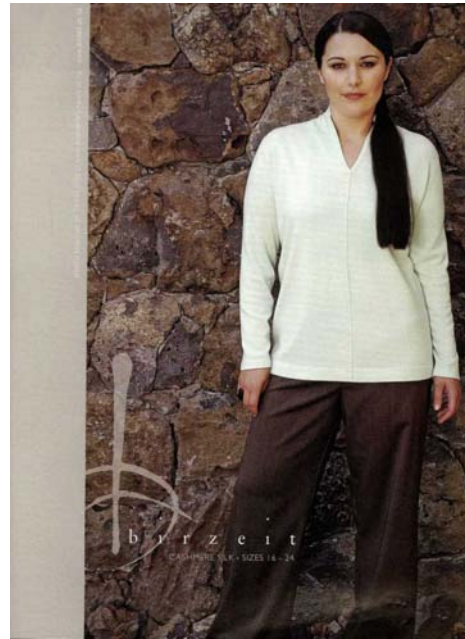
In fairness, all three demographics featured advertisements that showed low and high degrees of sexuality in their shoes and clothing category; however the above advertisements are representative of what is shown. Generally, the types of shoes and clothes worn, the amount of nakedness revealed, the pose of the models and their facial expressions are the main characteristics that differ between the oldest and youngest demographics and therefore the degree of sexuality within the advertisements.

It should be noted that *Vanity Fair* derives from the oldest demographic but it generally has higher degrees of sexuality across all of its advertising including shoes and clothing. It is the other three titles – *Next*, *The Australian Women's Weekly* and *O The Oprah Magazine* – that bring down the average sexuality score. Therefore, the images above are not wholly representative of *Vanity Fair*.

Two typical advertisements are analysed in detail below. Advertisement (a) derives from the youngest age group and advertisement (b) from the oldest.



(a)



(b)

The 'Holeproof Antz Pantz' lingerie advertisement (a) scored a high degree of sexuality rating. A breakdown of some of the scores reveals that in the clothing/shoes category it scored the highest possible rating 10/10. Some of the other categories also produced high results; Pose/Sexual Pose 9/10, Action/Still 9/10, and Nakedness 9/10. The scantily clad, lingerie models are wearing high heels and are posed in a coy, fun position. Goffman's 'bashful knee bend' is prominent in both models, especially the one on the right. The lace, ribbons, polka-dots and pastel colouring of the lingerie, linked with the pose, make the models appear virginal and yet not at the same time, leaving an air of mystery and fantasy. 'Advertising does not function by reproducing reality...but by presenting ideals and images of 'life and lives worth emulating' (Cronin 2004: 113). This in itself is what makes this advertisement and others like it so appealing. Overall, the degree of sexuality is stylistically incorporated into the advertisement and the models, products or theme could quite possibly be envied by the reader.

In contrast advertisement (b) featuring 'Birzeit' cashmere silk clothing is dull in comparison. Overall, its sexuality rating scored a low 2.2; Pose/Sexual Pose 5/10, Action/Still 8/10 and 2/10 for Setting/Props. The model is wearing plain, practical

clothing that does not address her femininity or sexuality on any level. The overall nature of the advertisement is not likely to cause feelings of envy nor desire by the consumer as the advertisement is selling a product and not a dream. These low results could be because larger sizes – 16 to 24 – are being advertised. ‘Plus’ size fashion is relatively difficult to advertise in a market where ‘thin is in’. Woman’s magazines are saturated with ‘lots of advertising featuring very thin models’ (Kilbourne 1999: 51), therefore, larger size ranges are generally not portrayed in a sexual manner. However, other advertisements (such as the ones above) in the oldest demographic received low sexuality scores and they were not promoting larger sizes.

The above examples and comparisons highlight how sexuality is used as an innovative tool in advertising shoes and clothing for the youngest demographic. The models’ youth and slimness is highlighted and enhanced by high degrees of sexuality. In the middle demographic this is also the case, just not to the same extent. The oldest demographic seems to be almost forgotten in terms of sexuality in this product category. This is discussed further in section 4.3.9 of Part II of this thesis.

### 3.5.13.2 Case Study 2 – Viva Glam Lipstick

The following images show a series of Viva Glam lipstick advertisements. This campaign was featured in the October 2006 issue of *Vanity Fair*. The advertisements were placed one after the other. The four advertisements are strikingly similar yet the degrees of sexuality used are vastly different.



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



Advertisement (d) which shows Dita Von Teese posed in a Martini Glass, rated fifth-equal in the top ten most sexual advertisements. It scored 8.1 in terms of degree of sexuality. Advertisement (a) received a similarly high rating as shown in Table 7 below.

**Table 7 –Sexuality ratings – Viva Glam Campaign**

Advertisement	Sexuality score
(a)	7.1
(b)	4.3
(c)	5.6
(d)	8.1

Overall, this campaign incorporates high degrees of sexuality into its advertisements. Only one of the advertisements – advertisement (b) – received a below-average sexuality rating. In contrast, advertisements (a) and (d) attained a substantially higher rating.

In advertisement (a) the small size of the image, colour reproduction and quality of the scanning makes it difficult to see the amount of nakedness and sexy clothing worn that has boosted the degree of sexuality substantially in this advertisement. For example, the choker tie around the model's neck could be perceived as a leash and there are two large-cat paw marks on the model's breasts; both are quite sexual notions.

Advertisement (d) is the most sexual image by far. Interestingly, a very similar image also showing Dita Von Teese in a life-size martini glass is appeared in a 2002 issue of Playboy magazine as shown below.



### **3.5.14 Summary of Results**

This part of the research has found that titles in the youngest demographic use the highest degree of sexuality in their advertising. The oldest demographic uses a far lower degree of sexuality.

It was found that advertisers use sexuality as an innovative tool to advertise their products. The fragrance product category proved to be the most sexual product category overall and in each individual demographic.

The images in some advertisements were strikingly similar to pornography. For instance the facial expressions of the models as well as the settings used, such as Dita Von Teese in a life-size martini glass – a classic pornographic setting.

It is interesting that an advertisement billboard was banned by Auckland International Airport due to the sexual text displayed and not because of the mostly naked model wearing provocative lacey red lingerie. This and the high degree of sexuality found in magazine advertising in this analysis could be construed as a desensitisation towards sexualised images in New Zealand society.

The results from this part of the research are compared to women's responses to such images in Part II. An overall conclusion incorporates results from both parts of the research.

## 3.6 Limitations and Solutions

---

This section describes the limitations encountered in this first part of this research and proposes some solutions that could limit their effect in future studies.

### 3.6.1 The Coding Schedule

The coding schedule played a fundamental role in this research. However, certain aspects of it proved problematic throughout the course of the analysis. These aspects were not addressed earlier because they were not detected until all of the 5,198 advertisements had been encoded. For the most part, even with the apparent flaws and limitations the coding schedule served its purpose in determining the degrees of sexuality within the advertisements. The results were an appropriate representation for the majority of the advertisements.

From the outset, the rigid guidelines and subsequent methodologies provided a quantitative structure for analysis, although all of the terms and definitions proved to be in some way subjective. The analysis relied upon the researcher, who, guided by the terms/definitions ultimately determined the final degree of sexuality based on her personal perceptions. In light of this, the coding schedule proved somewhat subjective because another researcher could use the same definitions and guidelines provided and still produce similar yet differing results. This is problematic in a quantitative framework which should provide the same results for a number of researchers undertaking the same research.

For further future research, the assistance of a co-coding schedule researcher or researchers – with a Mass Communications background and an interest in advertising – would assist in producing consistent results. The co-coding would need to be done at random intervals on any of the material that had been previously encoded by the primary researcher. If small discrepancies between the researchers' results occurred then the results would be discussed and perhaps an average could be taken. If however, a large variation was detected then the structure of the coding schedule would need to be revisited.



It would also be interesting to have the magazines encoded from a male perspective. This would allow for comparative analysis between genders.

### **3.6.1.1 Category Weightings**

During the initial drafting of the coding schedule each category was weighted, depending on the level of importance for each one in regards to determining the degree of sexuality. For example, the clothing worn by the model and the amount of nakedness shown was deemed as more important by the researcher than the use of settings and props. The former two categories were considered to function better in determining the degree of sexuality than the latter categories.

A weighting out of twenty was assigned to each category and used to moderate the results, such that a category with weighting of 10/20 would have half the effect on the final result that a category weighted 20/20 would have. This enabled the more categories that were perceived to be more important to dominate the sexuality score of the advertisement.

For example ‘Settings/Props’ were originally weighted 10/20 while ‘Nakedness’ and ‘Clothing/Shoes’ were both equally weighted 18/20 because they were deemed to be more important when measuring the degree of sexuality in an advertisement. A full breakdown of the preliminary category weightings is shown in Table 8.

**Table 8 - Category weightings**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Weighting</b>
Colour	10
Pose	20
Sexual acts	20
Action/still	15
Facial Expression	20
Clothing/shoes	18
Nakedness	18
Fragmentation	18
Text	15
Settings/props	10
Initial impression	20

This approach was decided to be too speculative in nature because the importance and weightings of the term/definitions were chosen and therefore biased by the researcher. This was not classed as a quantitative method and the weightings section was discarded from the final analysis. Had it been retained advertisements featuring men and women in a sexual pose would have been more likely to feature more often in the top ten most sexual advertisements. This was discussed in detail in section 3.5.8 of the results section above, and is also addressed in Part II of this thesis where women's responses and perceptions are investigated.

### **3.6.1.2 Terms and Definitions in the Coding Schedule**

Another similar problem – quantitative versus qualitative – arose when structuring the preliminary terms/definitions that would form the coding schedule. The notion of an 'initial impression' category was considered by the researcher. For example, viewing an advertisement for the first time for a split-second determines an individual's initial impression because much can be deemed by one single glance. However, this category proved problematic when used within a quantitative framework. An individual's own impression/taste or perception is virtually unquantifiable because it is not static; it often varies and fluctuates from day to day, hour to hour. A different result is almost certainly guaranteed between different people and so the experiment and results could not be mirrored by other researchers. This aspect challenges the notion of a quantitative study and therefore the term 'initial impression' could not be feasibly incorporated as part of the coding schedule and was rejected prior to the start of the analysis.

However, discarding the use of 'initial impression' category from this analysis should not by any means discredit the importance of the concept. It is recommended by the researcher that this category be incorporated into future research of this type in a more qualitative framework. After all, 'advertising thrives on meaning which is both predictable but unproveable' (Cook 1992: 45) such as the concept of an individual's initial impression.

Originally, eleven coding categories were used to determine the degree of sexuality in each advertisement; colour, sexual acts, action shot vs. still shot, facial expression, clothing and shoes, nakedness, fragmentation, text, setting and props. Initially, the advertisements were each individually encoded using these eleven definitions. However,

during the final graph and discussion analysis it was determined that the coding schedule was not fairly representing the frequency of sexuality appearing in all of the advertisements. The format of the old coding scheduling was not representative of overtly sexual advertisements which occurred very infrequently – around 15 to 30 in the entire analysis. Below are some examples of overtly sexual advertisements.



The above images portray the act of sex itself between men and women, and women with women. The categories were not originally devised to incorporate such overt images of sex because finding such graphic images in the magazine genre chosen for the analysis – women's fashion and general interest magazines – was not anticipated. However, if the genre had included magazines such as *FHM For Him Magazine* (a general men's interest magazine which incorporates images of scantily clad women in its content) or *Pavement Magazine* (which has recently ceased publication just one month after receiving media criticism for what some people believed were inappropriate fashion spreads portraying teenage girls in a soft porn setting) then a different coding schedule would have been devised from the outset.

In light of this, the eleven definitions were re-worked and merged into nine categories to try and provide a fairer portrayal of the degree of sexuality in these overtly sexual advertisements as well as the other advertisements in the analysis. The nine re-defined categories are; Colour/Text; Pose/Sexual Pose; Action Shot vs. Still Shot; Facial Expression; Clothing and Shoes; Nakedness; Fragmentation; Feminine Touch; Settings and Props. These categories were clearly explained in the coding schedule section.

The completion of the encoding process proved that once again the fifteen to thirty overtly sexual advertisements were not fairly represented in terms of the degrees of sexuality. However, the remainder of the over 5000 advertisements were better represented.

Another obvious drawback of this set of categories is that in some instances one of the terms cancels out another. For example, when a model is shown to be completely naked then the clothing shoes category automatically scores a 0.0. This often occurred during the encoding period. Nevertheless, even with its flaws intact, the coding schedule devised for this study served its function by determining the degree of sexuality of the majority of the advertisements featured overall. This is reflected in the discussion and analysis section.

For future research, the categories used in this analysis could be re-worked and re-used in light of these limitations that were found. A future coding schedule could be devised based primarily around the most overtly sexual advertisements. Initially, these could be deemed by the primary researcher's 'initial impression' of the images. The remainder of the images could be incorporated once the images with the highest degrees of sexuality had been accounted for. This type of approach would depend on the genre of magazine chosen for analysis.

Future research could incorporate the use of a celebrity category – advertisements endorsed by celebrities – to determine if the use of a celebrity increases the degree of sexuality overall.

#### **3.6.1.3 Product Categories**

Seven product categories were formulated – beauty, hair care, fragrance, personal, shoes/clothing, household, and other – to determine if the product categories coincided with the degrees of sexuality of the advertised product.

However, one of these product categories proved problematic. The 'other' product category was used to incorporate all of the products that could not be identified as one of the seven pre-determined categories.

Half-way through the encoding analysis it was determined that products such as sunglasses, watches and bags were frequently featured. As no such suitable category existed for these products they were recorded in the 'other' category. The frequency of such products increased the number of advertisements in the 'other' category quite substantially.

In future research, an ‘accessories’ product category should be added to include such products. This would diminish the high number of ‘other’ undetermined products within the analysis.

### **3.6.2 Content Analysis**

Content analysis was used within this research and for the most part functioned reasonably well in the context in which it was required. Content analysis suffers from weaknesses, since it ‘is not well suited to studying ‘deep’ questions about textual and discursive forms’ (Deacon 1999: 117). However, this weakness did not directly affect this research because ‘textual and discursive forms’ were not part of the intended analysis because it was predominantly quantitative and not qualitative in nature. However, where the research proved to be qualitative in nature it was difficult to apply it to the framework used.

### **3.6.3 Sampling**

#### **3.6.3.1 Inclusion/Exclusion of Advertisements**

Only full-page advertisements were analysed. Including all of the advertisements featured within the magazine was not feasible due to time constraints. Analysing all of the advertisements was originally considered although it was deemed that the over 5000 full-page advertisements provided a sufficient sample size. Also, in regards to determining the degree of sexuality it was determined that larger advertisements were not only easier to analyse but also an image appears more sexual the larger it is. Broadly speaking, a billboard showing an image of a half-naked woman will appear much more sexual than a smaller version of the same advertisement on the back of a taxi. In light of this, future research could incorporate all-sized advertisements into the analysis. A comparative case study of large and small advertisements highlights the importance of this and is included in the ‘survey limitations’ section in Part 2.

#### **3.6.3.2 Sample Size**

While over 5000 advertisements were analysed providing a large sample, in some instances this was deemed too small a sample. For example, throughout the entire analysis only six advertisements for shoes and clothing were featured in *She* magazine

which provided a very small sample compared with say *Glamour* magazine in which had 194 shoes and clothing advertisements.

In fact across the twelve issues of *She*, only 186 full-page advertisements were found compared with over 800 in *Glamour* magazine, as was discussed in section 3.5.3. It is perhaps unsurprising then that *She* magazine was discontinued at short notice in mid-2006. According to ACP Media's CEO "She's performance did not warrant continued investment." (ACP press release 15/05/2006).

### **3.6.4 Demographics**

Most major publishers produce a magazine such as *Dolly*, *Girlfriend*, *Cosmo Girl*, *Seventeen* or *Stella* for the 13 to 17 age demographic. This demographic was not included as part of this analysis from the outset. Possible considerations and restrictions recommended by the ethics committee specifically for the teen demographic would have been likely to increase the complexity of the research.

For future research the teenage demographic should be included in this type of analysis. Sexualised images appear in teen publications and it would be of interest to gain an insight into the degree of sexuality in women's as well as teen magazine advertising across the entire feminine spectrum – from 13 to 50 plus. This would allow for an extensive comparative analysis across the demographics overall. Such an analysis could be extended to include an investigation of the appropriateness of having such images in magazines read by teenagers, and perhaps consider the effect this has on young readers.

This view was outlined in Gorman's (2004) study, discussed in section 2.3.3 of the Literature Review. This was the only time teenagers were referred to in depth in this analysis. This demographic – similarly to the others – is in need of a comparative analysis to understand it in its full capacity.

## **4 Part II – Womens' Responses**

## 4.1 Introduction

---

Part I of the analysis deconstructed the degree of sexuality in over 5000 advertisements in 141 magazine issues.

Part II builds on this by exploring, through the use of an online survey, women's responses to an array of advertising questions: magazine consumption habits; advertising's influence on product purchases; opinions on the degree of sexuality in advertising. Some of the questions were based around the analysed advertisements from Part I to establish if the results reflected women's responses. For example, was the advertisement found to be the most sexual overall also deemed to be the most sexual by women?

This part of the research used both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The questions in the survey were posed in a closed-format traditional quantitative approach, while some parts of the results analysis were executed in a predominantly qualitative manner.

In total, there were 491 individuals who responded to the survey over a nine-week period.



## 4.2 Methodology

---

This section describes the methodology applied for Part II of the analysis. It covers the design of the surveys and reasoning behind the survey questions, and why the registration of a website for on-line surveys proved the best course of action. It also includes a description of the sampling methods used.

This research was concerned only with the views and responses of women aged 18 or over – the target market for the magazine titles studied in Part I.

### 4.2.1 Surveys

There are numerous ways to gauge information from research subjects, including telephone interviews, individual face-to-face interviews and focus groups. However, each of these methods is subjective in nature and could produce a qualitative set of results which was not the desired method for this analysis.

Survey analysis was undertaken to study women's responses to advertising, specifically, their responses towards the degree of sexuality featured in women's magazine advertising. Broad spectrums of women over 18 in the same age groups as the magazine target demographics were required.

This method was chosen since it is 'the most structured form of questioning because no intermediary is involved in presenting the questions or recording the answers' (Deacon et al., 1999: 64). This highly structured and standardised method of questioning allowed for predominantly quantitative results and discussion.

To ensure anonymity, certain questions such as name, occupation and religious affiliation were not asked as this information was considered irrelevant to this research. It was assumed that the respondents were female. Moreover, the introductory page of the survey emphasized 'please only complete this survey if you are female, and over 18 years of age.' It is assumed that respondents adhered to this - refer to the limitations in section 4.5.1.

Often surveys are sent by post or distributed and collected in person by the researcher. Both of these distribution methods prove problematic in terms of time, resources and

attainable sample size. In light of these limitations, an on-line survey method was employed. The Internet was utilised to circulate the surveys quickly and anonymously. 'Simple random sampling, where each sample element is selected on a completely random basis from the sampling frame' was undertaken (Deacon 1999: 46). This sampling research method allowed for a substantial response rate from a cross-section of the target demographics, with the respondents randomly selected. An online survey also allowed for rapid distribution of the surveys to women from a wide variety of backgrounds and locations.

A website ([www.magazinesurvey.co.nz](http://www.magazinesurvey.co.nz)) was registered for the purpose of the survey. The website name 'magazine survey' was chosen because it gave respondents some idea of the topic of the survey without mentioning sexuality. Doing so could have caused respondents to form opinions on the content before starting the survey. Similarly, the welcome page with survey instructions did not mention that the survey was primarily concerned with responses towards the varying degrees of sexuality in advertising.

To start the process and distribute the surveys, the researcher sent an initial set of individual e-mails to female friends and colleagues aged over 18 requesting that they complete the survey and forward it on to other women. Apart from this initial correspondence – consisting of around thirty individual e-mails – the respondents have remained completely anonymous to the researcher. The survey was designed to take between two and five minutes to complete depending on the depth of the response. The brevity of the survey was intended for two reasons; to entice participation by respondents and to ensure quick downloading of the document on slow internet servers.

The website automatically generated an e-mail with each participant's results which was sent to the researcher for analysis. Receiving results in this electronic format allowed for rapid collation and processing of the results via a computer programme.

The full survey, is shown in Appendix B, and should be referred to while reading the discussion of the survey questions in section 4.2.2.

### 4.2.2 Survey Questions

The survey comprised 14 questions and was divided into six sections. The questions focused on sexuality in advertising, magazine consumption, product choice and advertising influence. Each question was formulated to gauge specific responses on the above mentioned subject areas and to reflect and engage the results and analysis from Part I.

The questions required different types of responses; some required a ‘tick in the box’ to a list of predetermined options, while other questions required a rating on a Likert Scale – strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree – to a range of statements. Likert Scale analysis is a standard survey technique as described by Jamieson (2004: 1217-1218). Due to the closed-format style of the survey, respondents were given an opportunity to further express their views in a ‘comments’ section. Submission of the survey automatically produced a final ‘thank you’ page for the respondent which in turn created a link for another respondent to complete the survey from the same computer.

The first section, consisting of five questions, established the age, geographic location and magazine consumption habits of the respondent. Question one categorised age groups into four age demographics that were used in Part I: 18-24, 25-34, 35-50 plus. This was essential to allow responses to be compared between the different age categories. These age categories were chosen to be the same as the target demographic categories used by the publishers of magazines analysed in Part I. Question two sought to find out the geographic location of the respondents. Question three asked respondents which magazines out of those analysed in Part I they had read or flicked through in the last 12 months.

Questions four and five established how often the respondents read magazines and how they came across them – this ranged from subscription, reading in waiting room areas to reading online. These types of questions are important because it is generally assumed that greater consumption of magazines results in higher exposure to advertising messages which in turn results in purchase of advertised products.

These preliminary five questions were asked to establish that respondents were a cross-section from the target age demographic and were familiar with the women’s magazines analysed in Part I.

The second section explored the product purchasing decisions made by respondents following reading of women's magazines. Question 6a asked how many products the respondents purchased based on an advertisement over the last month. Question 6b asked the respondents what they recollected from the advertisement.

Section three listed three statement-style questions. It was constructed using the Likert Scale. Statements seven, eight and nine are interrelated, focusing on consumption influences. They question if advertising increases and influences product expenditure and if celebrity endorsed advertisements have any influence on purchases. These questions probed the influence of advertising. This area is of importance to advertisers, who have to convince their clients that placing an advertisement into a publication – aimed at a specific demographic – will ultimately result in increased product sales. In addition, this area is of importance to this analysis because it is assumed that the more influenced consumers would have more opinions on the degree of sexuality used throughout advertising.

The fourth section, statements ten and eleven, were the first questions on sexuality. They were placed immediately after the questions on product consumption. This was done intentionally to ensure that the respondents had not established the focus of the survey and pre-determined their answers without first properly reading the questions. These two statements questioned if advertising in women's magazines is representative of 'average' women and women of all ages. Part I of the analysis established that 'average' and 'older' women are often not featured in women's magazine advertising and are under-represented in terms of sexuality. These questions were intended to gauge if the respondent's views reflected these findings.





In the fifth section, questions 12 and 13, respondents were provided with six images that were analysed in Part I of the analysis, along with two response statements in a Lickert Scale format. These images are shown above and on the previous page. The questions asked if women in the images were represented in a sexual way and if the degree of sexuality used was appropriate for the product being advertised. These two questions were designed to determine how women feel about the degree of sexuality used in a selection of common magazine advertisements. The advertisements are a cross-section of the images seen in the titles studied in Part I, from highly sexual to very low levels of sexuality.

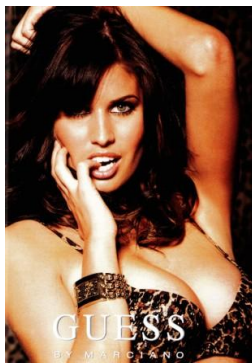
In the final section (question 14), the respondents were provided with another six advertisements from Part I. The respondents were asked to rate the advertisements in order of most to least sexual. This question was used to gauge how the respondents determined the degrees of sexuality, based on their own perceptions, compared to the results from the coding schedule. This section was of utmost importance because it highlights the negatives as well as positives within the coding schedule construct. It compares the highly structured and quantitative approach of Part I with how 'real' women determine and rate sexuality in advertising. This section was arguably the most important of the survey and it was essential to ensure that appropriate images were chosen. The images are shown, and their selection explained in detail in section 4.2.3 below.

At the end of the survey, a comments section was provided for those respondents who wished to add extra observations regarding the research. This gave the respondents the opportunity to provide qualitative comments, outside the framework of the predominantly quantitative survey.

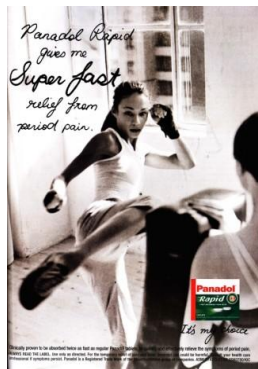
### 4.2.3 Sampling for Question 14

Sampling methods were employed to select an appropriate set of images for question 14 of the survey. Ideally, these images would reflect the varying degrees of sexuality throughout the analysis in Part I. Selecting the six images required for this section, was difficult because of the array of choice from the 5,198 analysed images. This was undertaken in a purposive manner and six appropriate images – largely representative of Part I’s findings – were selected and included in the survey.

A ‘purposive’ (Deacon 1999: 46) sampling method was used. The six chosen images were representative of widely varying degrees of sexuality – from ‘extremely’ to ‘not at all’ sexual – on the coding schedule. The six images are shown below. Of the six images; two images were deemed as ‘extremely’ sexual and two as ‘quite’ sexual. The final two images chosen were ‘average’ to ‘not’ sexual.



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)

The ‘most’ and ‘least’ sexual images were the first to be chosen because they were easily identifiable on the coding schedule. The image that received the highest degree of sexuality rating overall in Part I of the research from all of the 5,198 images was chosen

to represent the ‘most sexual’ image – advertisement (a). The ‘least’ sexual image – advertisement (b) – was one of several that scored 0.0. This ‘action shot’ was chosen because women are traditionally desexualised in action shots such as this. It was decided that it would be interesting to gauge how the respondents determined the action shot – sexual or non-sexual.

Advertisement (c) portrays an older woman, and was chosen because only two of the 5,198 images portrayed older women. This image scored a very low degree of sexuality rating and was included to gauge the respondents’ view of older women in advertising.

Advertisement (d) is part of the Dove ‘Campaign for Real Beauty’ range. It was included to see if ‘real beauty’ was considered to be sexy by respondents. This advertisement got an average sexuality rating in Part I.

Advertisement (e) epitomises sex and therefore the degree of sexuality is quite high. It shows a naked man and woman kissing passionately. This image was included to see if it was considered to be more sexual by respondents than advertisement (a), which scored the highest score in Part I. It was noted in Part I’s limitations section that images such as image (e) did not result in high sexuality scores even if they appeared overtly sexual due to the coding schedule construct.

In image (f) the high degree of fragmentation objectifies the woman to an extreme. It received quite a high degree of sexuality rating but it was not higher than image (a) or (e). Including this image would allow respondents to view three different but all highly sexual images. This would help to give an indication of which type of advertisement was deemed to be the most sexual overall by the survey respondents, with three distinct choices for the most sexual advertisement: the classic come-hither woman wearing an animal printed bra; the simple act of sexual intimacy between a man and a woman; or a woman’s sexy behind.

Choosing the advertisements in this manner is known also as ‘relevance sampling’ (Krippendorff 2004:119).

## 4.3 Results, Analysis and Discussion

---

This section shows how women responded to certain aspects of advertising and to specific advertisements. The findings from the on-line survey of nearly 500 female respondents reveal a number of interesting points.

This section presents:

- Age and geographic location of respondents
- Magazine consumption patterns
- Advertising influence and recollection of advertisements
- Views on the representation of ‘average’ and older women in advertising
- Views on sexuality in advertising
- Plus, the respondents rate six images in order of most to least sexual

Advertising images and graphs are used to assist in the explanation of results. Also, at the end of the survey respondents were asked to add any additional comments. Selections of these comments are included throughout the analysis to add insight to the predominantly quantitative data. It should be noted that respondents’ comments are as submitted and have not been edited for grammatical and spelling errors. This ensures that the original meaning of the comment is not lost in translation, ensuring authenticity.

### 4.3.1 Terminology

In this section, the following terminology applies:

*Age category* refers to one of the distinct age groups of respondents: 18-24, 25-34, 35-50+.

*Demographic* refers to the publishers’ target demographics for the magazines.

This distinction is provided to ensure clarity between the respondents to this survey and the publishers’ demographics.

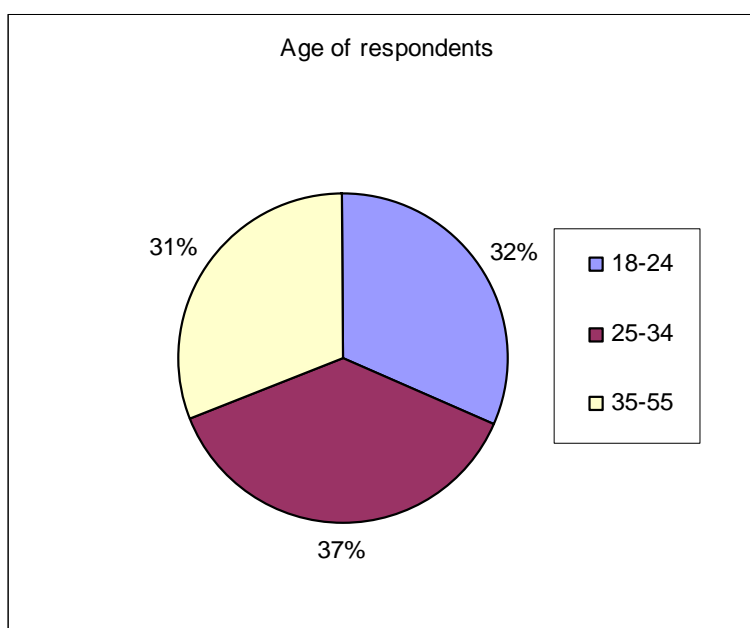


### 4.3.2 Preliminary Questions

The first five questions in the survey were used to establish that the respondents represented a suitable cross-section of society, with diverse ages, locations and magazine readership habits. This also ensures the respondents are in fact the desired target demographic of the publishers and therefore the target age demographic of this research.

#### 4.3.2.1 Age of Respondents

Question one asked respondents which age group they derived from.

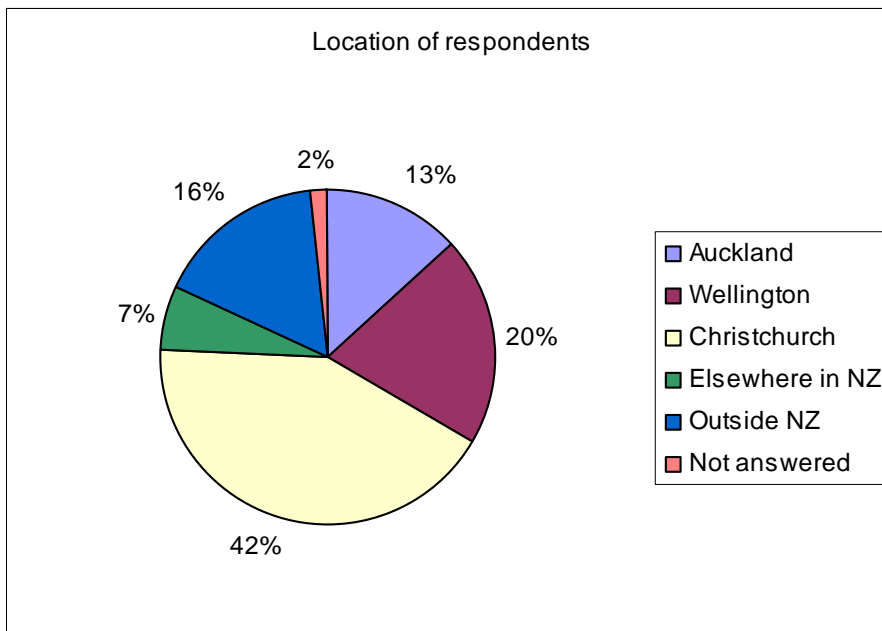


**Figure 11 - Age of Respondents**

Figure 11 shows that the age of respondents was quite evenly divided providing a fair representation across the three demographics. This type of equal division of responses from an uncontrolled sample is generally unheard of. Previously, it had been assumed that the response rate from the youngest age category would have been the highest and the oldest the lowest, as it was expected that younger respondents would be more interested in the subject.

#### 4.3.2.2 Location of Respondents

Question two asked respondents their geographic location.



**Figure 12 - Location of Respondents**

Figure 12 shows that forty-two percent of respondents were from Christchurch, which is to be anticipated because that is where the survey and initial circulatory e-mails originated. Twenty percent were from Wellington, and fourteen percent from Auckland. Thus more than fifty percent of respondents were located in one of New Zealand's three main cities.

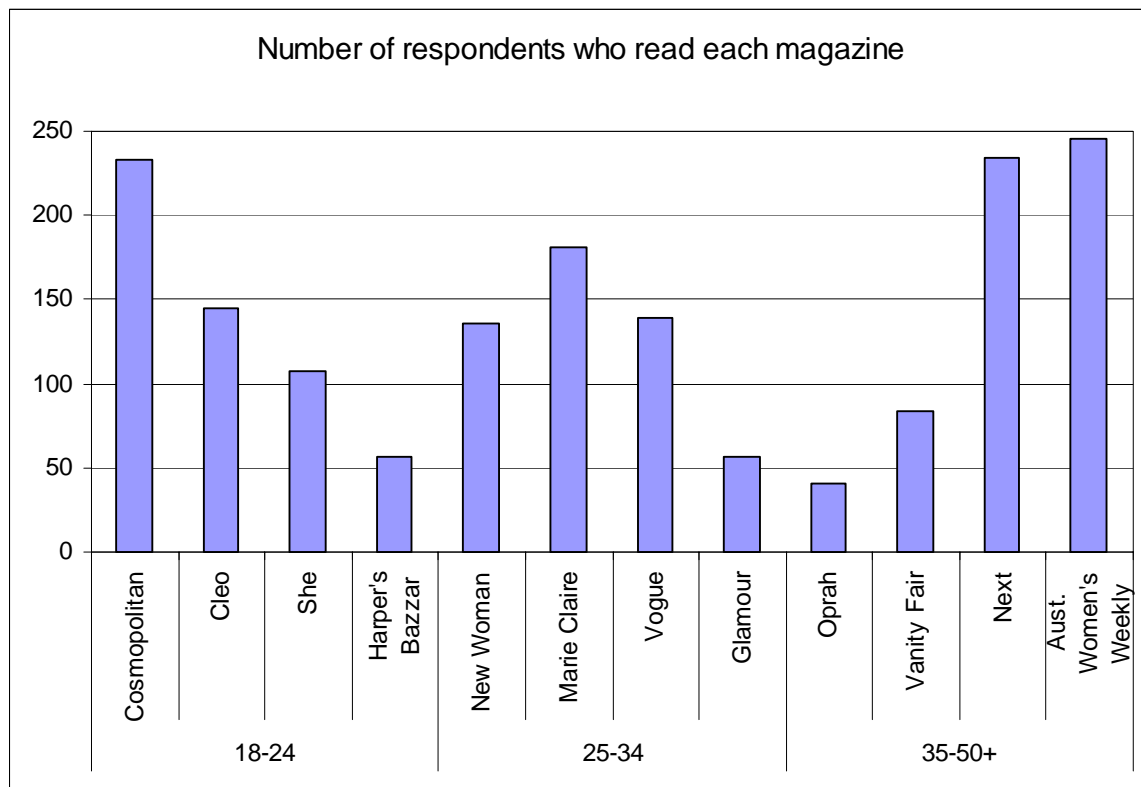
Surprisingly, the survey travelled off-shore with 17 percent of the respondents listed as from 'outside NZ'. Categories for the rest of the world were not formulated because a far lower number – if any – were anticipated from respondents outside of New Zealand.

#### **4.3.2.3 Magazine Consumption Habits**

This section entails four questions relating to respondents' magazine consumption habits. This includes the magazines read by respondents and the possible reasons behind this readership. The age category of the readers is shown as well as the frequency and method of consuming magazines.

##### **Magazines Read by Respondents**

Question three listed twelve magazine titles and asked respondents to indicate which ones they had flicked through or read in the past twelve months. The twelve titles were those analysed in Part I.



**Figure 13 - Number of respondents who read each magazine**

Would New Zealand women prefer to read about American celebrity Paris Hilton or about former television news presenter Judy Bailey?

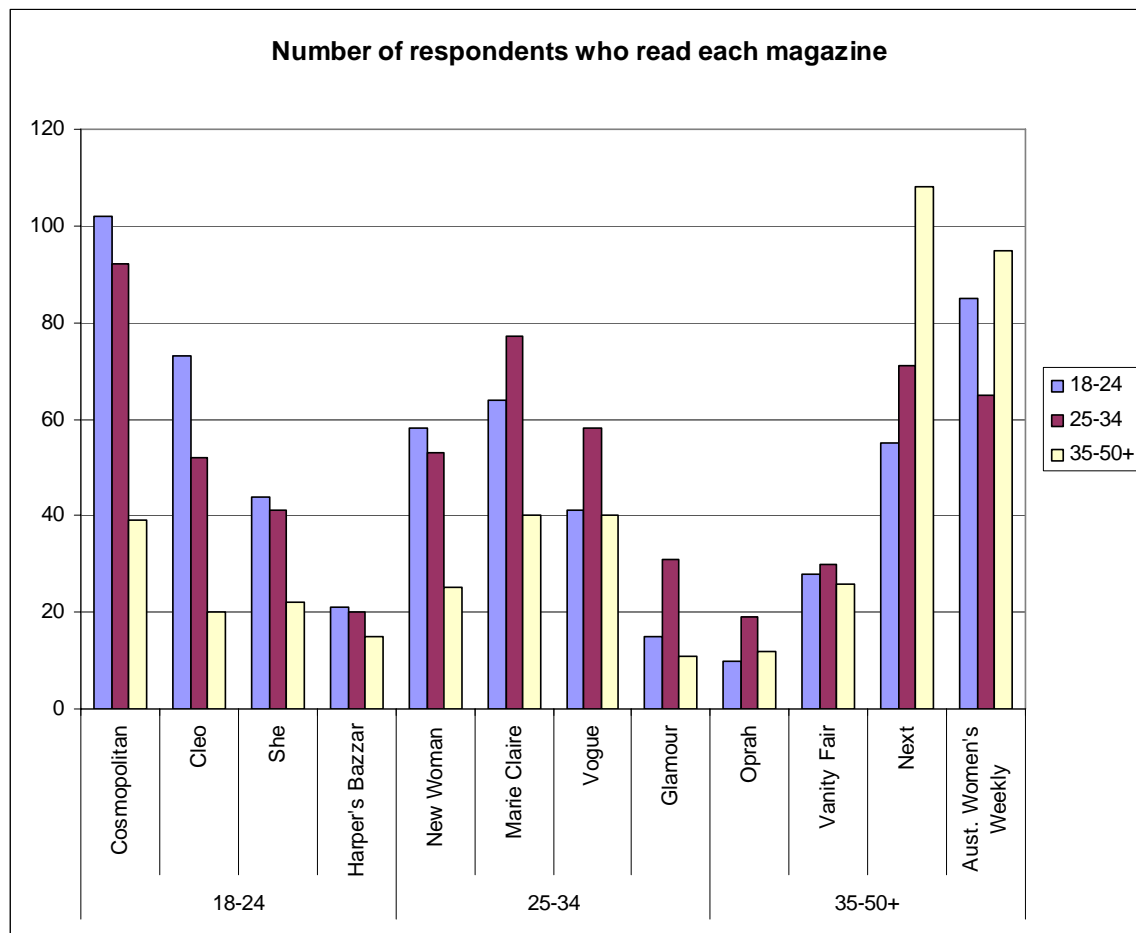
Figure 3 reveals that two New Zealand publications had the highest readerships across twelve titles surveyed. This may reflect the fact that these New Zealand publications often contain stories of nationwide appeal, and have greater profile and circulation than the imported magazines.

*The Australian Women's Weekly (NZ Edition)* had the highest readership overall. It derives from the oldest demographic and was read by 245 of the 491 respondents. It retails for just over six New Zealand dollars which makes it one of the least expensive titles available; and it is often bought by mothers and professional women who may leave it lying around in the home or workplace for others to read. Also, the front covers – a magazine's biggest advertisement – often feature well-known New Zealand and Australian sports stars, celebrities and politicians, such as New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark, singer Hayley Westenra and former Silver Ferns captain Bernice Mene. The

next most read magazine is – irony aside – *Next*, which was read by 234 respondents. It, too, is a New Zealand publication. *Cosmopolitan* was read by 233 respondents.

*O The Oprah Magazine*, read by 41 of the 491 respondents also derives from the oldest demographic which holds two of the most read magazines. The low readership of the O Magazine in New Zealand is probably caused by two factors: cost and availability. It is published in the United States and retails here for fifteen to twenty New Zealand dollars.

*Glamour* magazine from the middle demographic also had a very low readership rating, probably because it is published in South Africa, the United States and the United Kingdom, but not Australia or New Zealand. It is a user-friendly magazine – sized just small enough to fit into most reasonably shaped handbags.



**Figure 14 - Magazine readership across the age categories**

Figure 4 shows that the age categories of the respondents tie in relatively well with the demographics. This shows that a good cross-section of the respondents' is generally

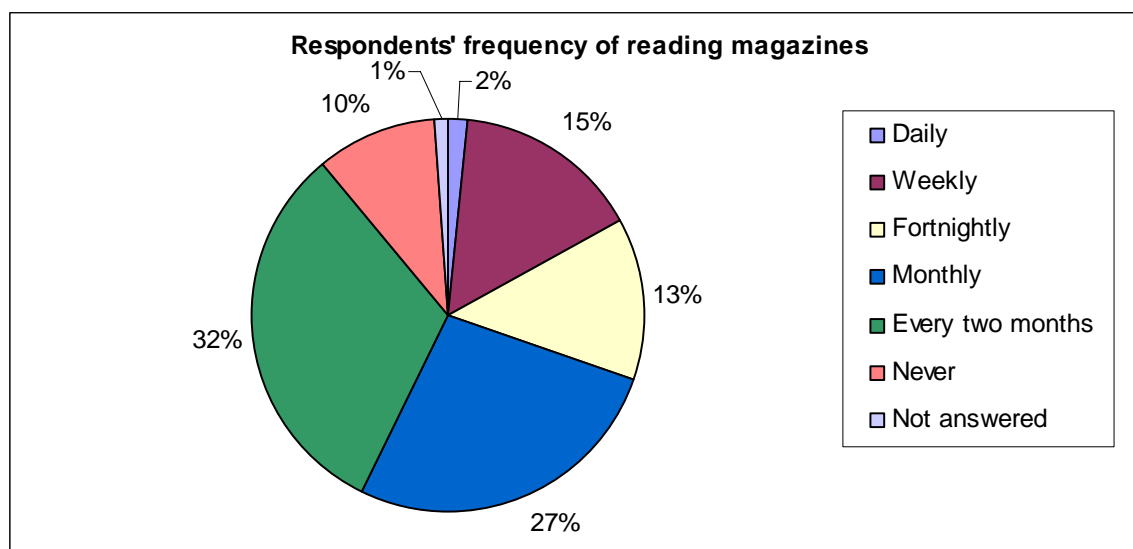
aligned with the target demographics and are therefore an accurate reflection of the target readership.

The youngest age category (18-24) is most reflective of the target readership. It had the highest consumption rates across each of the magazine titles' that were aimed at the target demographic. The middle demographic was very similar to this, apart from one of the titles. *New Woman* was most read by the youngest age category and is this reflective of the fact that this actual publication is targeted at an 18-34 demographic – a combination of both the young and middle age categories. This was explained in section 3.2.1 of Part I of the analysis and highlights that the median age of these readers is between the ages of 25-34.

The oldest demographic (35-50+) shows the least accurately targeted readership across two of its titles amongst the survey respondents. *O The Oprah Magazine* and *Vanity Fair* were read by a cross-section of the age categories. The other two titles in this demographic are mainly consumed by women in this age category.

### Frequency of Reading

Question four asked respondents how frequently they read the magazines listed in Question three.



**Figure 15 - Respondents' frequency of reading magazines**

Figure 15 shows that one percent read magazines on a daily basis, and thirty-two percent read magazines only once every two months. Of concern for the industry was that ten percent claimed to ‘never’ read magazines.

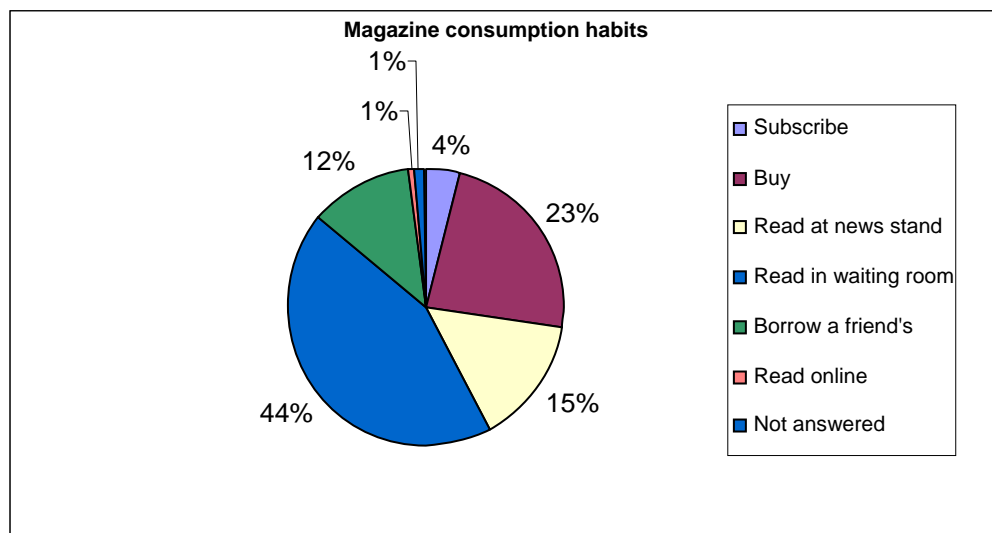
Twenty-seven percent said they read magazines on a monthly, fourteen percent fortnightly and fifteen percent weekly.

One female respondent from the oldest demographic (35-50 plus) claimed her frequency of reading women’s magazines would increase if the publishers would;

*‘Bring on a GOOD Magazine with...nicely dressed women of all ages. I might buy a magazine then!’*

### Type of Magazine Consumption

Question five asked respondents how they would best describe their magazine use.



**Figure 16 - Magazine consumption habits**

Figure 16 does shows that nearly half of the respondents – forty-five percent – do not buy or subscribe to a magazine but read it while they are in a waiting room. In this case, the magazine has been bought by one person and is being ready by several readers.

Figure 15 also shows that respondents were reluctant to read magazines ‘online’. Perhaps this highlights that online magazines are a relatively new medium and respondents are not aware of its availability. This could also be because the magazine websites tend to

provide reduced content compared to the printed editions. However, interactivity such as music and online chat are often available on the websites.

### **Summary**

The responses to questions one to five above show that the survey respondents' are from diverse age groups and locations, and have different magazine consumption habits. This diverse sample reveals that the results of the survey can be expected to be representative of a good cross-section of women in the publishers' target demographics.

### **4.3.3 Product Purchasing Decisions**

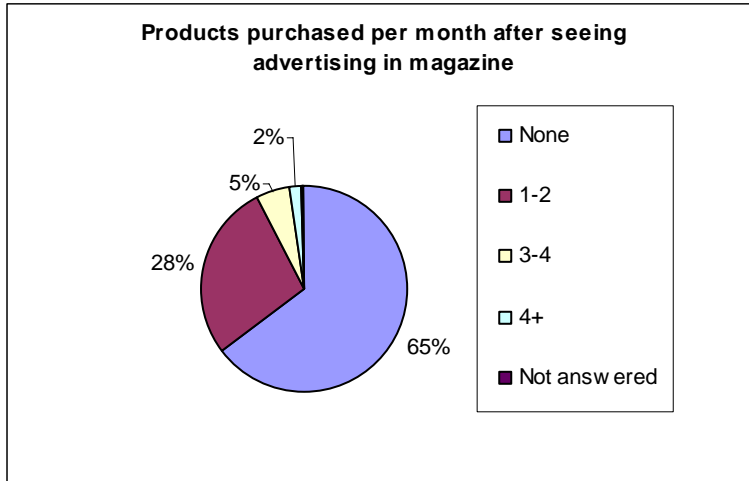
This section of the survey consisted of two questions focused on respondents' purchasing decisions and the influence advertising has on those decisions.

Specifically, these questions asked about the number of products purchased over a month after reading women's magazines. Respondents were asked to elaborate on what aspects of the advertisements they remembered in relation to the products they purchased.

This was considered to be an important aspect within this analysis because it highlights and identifies the areas of advertising that respondents found memorable – it is interesting to see if the degrees of sexuality are one of these areas.

#### 4.3.3.1 Number of Products Purchased

In question 6a, respondents were asked how many products they had purchased based on advertisements they saw in women's magazines over the last month.



**Figure 17 - Products purchased per month due to advertising**

Figure 17 reveals that sixty-five percent of respondents claim not to have purchased any products over a one-month period after viewing advertisements in a magazine. This, of course, is debatable as it is possible the respondents could not recollect which advertisements they saw, let alone which products they purchased. Moreover, the advertising industry would not be as profitable as it is today if this was true. This suggests that respondents are often unaware of the pervasive nature of advertising.

'The fact is that much of advertising's power comes from this belief that advertising does not affect us. The most effective kind of propaganda is that which is not recognized as propaganda. Because we think that advertising is silly and trivial, we are less on guard, less critical, than we might otherwise be...while we're laughing, sometimes sneering, the commercial does its work' (Kilbourne 1999: 27).

To be successful, advertisers want consumers to believe that they have no influence on them – they are 'forever claiming that advertising doesn't influence anyone' (ibid:40) – yet they spend billions of dollars on advertising campaigns to lure consumers.

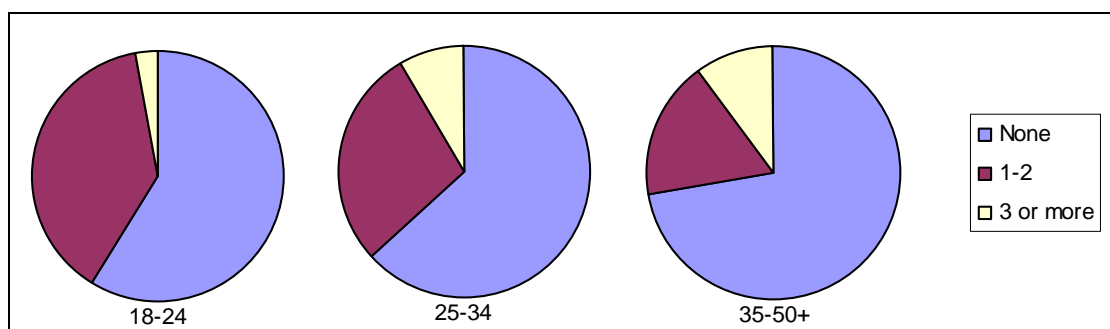


Meanwhile, 28 percent of respondents said that monthly they purchased one or two products that they had seen advertised in a magazine, and five percent said they bought three to four advertised products per month. Only two percent said they had more than four products monthly after viewing them in advertisements.

The comment below is from a respondent from the oldest demographic (35-50 plus). She explains what products she purchases and which she does not, and even recollects an advertising campaign that she found so offensive that she no longer purchases her husband's clothes from that store.

*'I always deliberately buy dove products on a monthly basis now as a result of their advertising because I appreciate the concept and never compare the price just always buy it. Apart from that the opposite is true – I am in fact put off by products by the advertising and don't buy certain things on principal cause I hate the overtly sexual images and I refuse to buy them, L'Oreal and Guess are pretty bad. There was a really annoying sexist set of Hallenstiens Menswear adds making women look cheap and I never get my husband clothing there now'*

Figure 18 shows that the younger respondents are more likely to purchase a product after viewing advertising in a magazine. This leads toward the conclusion that younger readers are more likely to be influenced by the high levels of signification in advertising – where advertisements promote a lifestyle or dream that they aspire to. This notion is discussed in detail in section 4.4.2 - Types of Consumers.



**Figure 18 - Responses to Q6a by age category**

Even though respondents from oldest age category claim to be least likely to be influenced by advertisements this category has the highest proportion respondents who purchase three or more products per month. This is likely to be more of a reflection of

higher disposable incomes in this age category than being more susceptible to advertising messages.

#### **4.3.3.2 Recollections from advertising**

In Question 6b respondents were asked to specify what they remembered from the advertisement of the product they purchased. Just over one hundred respondents filled out this section. Selections of these responses were separated into different categories using content analysis in the form of ‘categorical distinctions’ (Krippendorff 2004: 105) based on the respondents’ own use of words. The categories are:

- degrees of sexuality
- the promise of the advertisement
- freebies and price
- advertising features
- celebrity endorsement
- functionality of the product
- the product’s newness factor

‘Categorical distinctions define units by...their having something in common’ (ibid: 105). Therefore, seven categories were created using the respondents’ own responses and any common textual features and meanings defined the categories. An ‘other’ section is included at the end to include two comments that could not be incorporated into the seven categories but are considered to be equally important.

‘Purposive’ or ‘relevance sampling’ (Krippendorff 2004: 119) methods were employed in selecting the responses to present in this section. Over one-hundred respondents filled out this section which proved too large a sample size for complete inclusion within the main-body of the thesis. The researcher chose the comments based on textual commonality factors. Use of relevance sampling ensured that ‘the resulting units of text are not meant to be representative of a population of texts; rather, they are the population of relevant texts, excluding the textual units that do not possess relevant information’ (ibid: 119). Therefore, the categories showed only relevant comments and this sample size allowed for inclusion of the comments and analysis in the main-body of the thesis.

The categories are described in detail and the responses shown in the sections below. The comments derive from cross section of the respondents across the three age categories. These responses have not been altered for spelling or grammatical errors.

### **The degree of Sexuality**

This category is directly reflective of the research undertaken in Part I. It refers to varying degrees of sexuality portrayed in an advertisement through – amongst other sexual aspects – the incorporation of nakedness, beauty and overall ‘look’ of the models used. Twelve of the one-hundred respondents recollected an advertisement based on its degrees of sexuality. Only one of the comments in Table 9 below had negative connotations about this aspect of advertising, the rest found it quite appealing.

It is interesting to note that this area has emerged considering that up to this point nothing in the survey has mentioned this concept. Therefore, these comments on sexuality are clearly unsolicited and point out that some respondents not only noticed but recollected the degrees of sexuality in advertising.

**Table 9 - The degree of sexuality**

<b>Respondent number</b>	<b>Response</b>
1	‘The nakedness of the women’
14	‘Looked cool, had young beautiful people in it’
17	‘If the model was hot’
119	‘Age of models’
129	‘Attractive people looking summery’
163	‘Amount of exposed ‘flesh’. I buy the products to look like the women in the ads but it never works out that way. Yet I fall for it, time and again’.
168	‘It was hot hot hot!’
177	‘Beautiful people’
267	‘The ‘look’ of the person selling it’
268	‘Its sexy appeal. Glamorous woman etc...’
318	‘My disgust of the sexual implications of women in the ads’
410	‘How great the women looked who supposedly used the product’

### **The promise of the advertisement**

According to Williams, ‘promise, large promise, is the soul of an advertisement’ (1961:6). Indeed, this appears to be the case because this is the reason listed for purchasing a product for just over one quarter of the respondents who completed this section of the survey. This category is defined by anything that the advertisement

‘promises’ to deliver – the benefits, advantages, improvements and solutions on offer, as well as the general dream-like depiction of life. Twenty-three of the respondents remembered an advertisement’s ‘promise’ and some of them even used the word, while one of the respondents believed that the advertisement was telling the ‘truth’. These comments are listed in Table 10 below.

**Table 10 - The promise of the advertisement**

<b>Respondent number</b>	<b>Response</b>
10	‘The look of it and the promises’
28	‘...if beauty product probably the promise it (the ad) made!’
54	‘It can approve your health or looks’
73	‘The before and after pictures’
104	‘If I purchase a product from a mag I remember how good the person advertising looks knowing very well that I won’t look like that but still get sucked into buying the stuff.’
146	‘The good looking girl who advertised it, it made you think you would look better’
185	‘Promises to make me look younger!’
194	‘The gorgeous lifestyle and the pretty things shown’
239	‘Description of what it can (allegedly!) do for me’
256	‘Description of product – what it claims to do’
274	‘The improvements it was meant to make’
281	‘I believed they were telling the truth about their product’
290	‘Tans while it moisturizers!’
292	‘Written description of benefits’
297	‘Appeal to values’
307	‘Indicated a trend or upcoming fashion’
326	‘Style and benefits of the product’
328	‘If I did, it would be the colour, the sex appeal of the woman sporting the product – hence it would make me feel sexy to use and any recommendations from celebrities I admire’
330	‘They were really informative – as in – do you have this problem – than here’s a solution’
443	‘Was informative and listed the benefits/advantages of the product’
452	‘Anti-aging claims for skin care’

### **Freebies and price**

This category is defined by the affordability of the advertised product and if an ‘extra’ free sample was included. This category was referred to the least. It was an aspect that was recollected by seven of the respondents. The responses in this category are shown in Table 11, on the following page.

**Table 11 - Freebies and price**

<b>Respondent number</b>	<b>Response</b>
31	'Lipstick sample that looked good – so I bought it!'
59	'Freebies with or samples of the product'
97	'Cost'
117	'Free sample provided!'
342	'The special price'
363	'Scratch and sniff sample of new perfume – liked the smell so bought it'
455	'The price and locations of where to buy the product'

### **Advertising features**

Advertising features refers to the tools and techniques used by an advertiser. This can range from the branding of the product, the slogan, graphics and photography to the use of colour. Table 12 shows that some of the respondents recollected an advertisement based on colour – this is reflected in Part I of the analysis where the coding schedule highlights the importance of colour in an advertisement.

**Table 12 - Advertising features**

<b>Respondent number</b>	<b>Response</b>
0	'The brand'
27	'An innovative approach'
134	'The colours (I am attracted to bright things ha-ha)'
157	'The catch phrase of the ad'
210	'Punch lines'
222	'The frequency'
263	'Graphic design'
340	'Colour, product design'
391	'Layout and colour, the pictures and words that made it interesting'
436	'The humour'
437	'Appealing imagery'
460	'Bright colourful ad that caught my attention'

### **Celebrity endorsement**

Table 13, on the following page, shows that nine of the respondents remembered an advertisement based on whether or not it was endorsed by a celebrity or famous model. Any mention of either is the definition of this category.

**Table 13 - Celebrity Endorsement**

Respondent number	Response
38	'...prominence of who supported the product'
110	'the model/spokesperson'
283	'The actress model promoting it'
325	'The brand and celebrity endorsement'
328	If I did, it would be the colour, the sex appeal of the woman sporting the product – hence it would make me feel sexy to use and any recommendations from celebrities I admire'
329	'The celebrity promoting it'
424	'The person promoting it, whether he/she was reputable'
465	'Endorsements'
475	'Bold, convincing celeb'

### Functionality

This category is defined by how the product functions and how it can be used by the consumer. Table 14 below shows respondents' comments on this category.

**Table 14 – Functionality**

Respondent number	Response
53	'...what it can do/smells like/looks like etc.'
197	'recycling advertisement turning plastic into useful objects'
198	'It's usefulness to me'
212	'It would help my psoriasis' (a skin condition)
235	'Seemed to be a new idea of an old product, which was able to suit my needs'
275	'The name and the function'
381	'Factual-sounding information on how the product works. "This mascara uses superglue to never come off, ever! It is the most long-lasting mascara ever.." I'm a real sucker for people saying something is the "Most" rather than the "Best"
392	'The product itself was something that was of use to me'
397	'The ability of the product to fit my needs'
420	'Description of uses'

### 'Newness' factor

Table 15 shows the six responses that used the word 'new' or 'newly' to describe what they remembered about an advertisement that enticed them to buy the product. Any description of a 'new' product is included in this category.

**Table 15 – 'Newness' factor**

Respondent	Response
------------	----------

number	
67	67 'Newly released product that caught my eye'
78	78 'New food products'
171	171 'If it looked like a new product I hadn't tried'
270	'Usually new products – often cosmetics/toiletries'
372	372 'It was a new product that I was spurred into trying'
393	393 'Details of new products'

### Other

Two respondents below (Table 16) do not remember the specific advertisement nor do they recollect the actual product purchased. However, they both acknowledged that they purchased something because of the effectiveness and inescapable nature and influence of advertising. These comments are in direct contrast to the responses to question 6a (in section 4.3.3.1) where 65 percent of the respondents claimed to have purchased no products after viewing advertising.

**Table 16 - Other responses**

Respondent number	Response
277	'Actually I don't remember exactly which product I bought based on advertisement(s), but I'm sure I must have bought something out of advertising, because advertising is all around, and it affects me when I'm unaware of it's existence'.
331	'Can't remember...but I'm sure I must have bought SOMETHING under SOME influence!'

### Summary

The above analysis of respondents' comments shows that three of the seven categories were referred to more often by respondents than the other categories. The category that was referred to the most was the 'promise' of an advertisement. This high response rate is reflective of the fact that advertising in women's magazines is often centred on nothing more than a promise – a window to an idealistic world that in reality is nothing more than a dream. These types of advertisements are often for 'high-involvement feeling products' (Schudson 1993: 51) such as fragrance (refer to section 4.4 - Understanding Interpretation of Advertising). Fragrance advertising, the most sexual product category in the analysis of Part I, relied heavily on the 'promise' in the promotion of such 'high involvement' products.

Advertising features and the degree of sexuality – came in second equal. This shows that the array of techniques applied by advertisers is successful to an extent, because they were recollected by some of the respondents. The degree of sexuality was also often recollected and this is interesting considering that it had not yet been introduced to the respondents. Most of the comments appeared to have found the use of sexuality as appealing, inspiring even, while one respondent was quite literally ‘disgusted’ with its use. Either way, its importance is reflective of Part I of the analysis.

Advertising features – how an advertisement is structured through the use of branding and colour and so forth – were also recollected by respondents. This section shows that respondents recollected some aspects of advertising more than others. Perhaps this points to a recipe for a successful advertising campaign:

**Ingredients:**

- A heap of ‘promise’
- A sprinkling of advertising features
- And a dash of sexuality to taste.

**Method:**

Combine ingredients in an artistic manner and simmer for 15 minutes. The final result is: an advertising campaign that is recollected by its consumers.

#### **4.3.4 The Influence of Advertising**

This section asked respondents about how influential they thought advertising was with regards to their product purchases. It is interesting to note that questions seven and eight are very similar and yet the responses were significantly different. Question nine sought to determine how celebrities impact product purchase considering the cultural associations their presence conveys, as well as expenditure incurred by the advertisers for this presence.

This is an important section because if it can be shown that advertising influences product consumption, then it is assumed that it too will influence respondents’ perceptions to the degrees of sexuality featured in advertising.

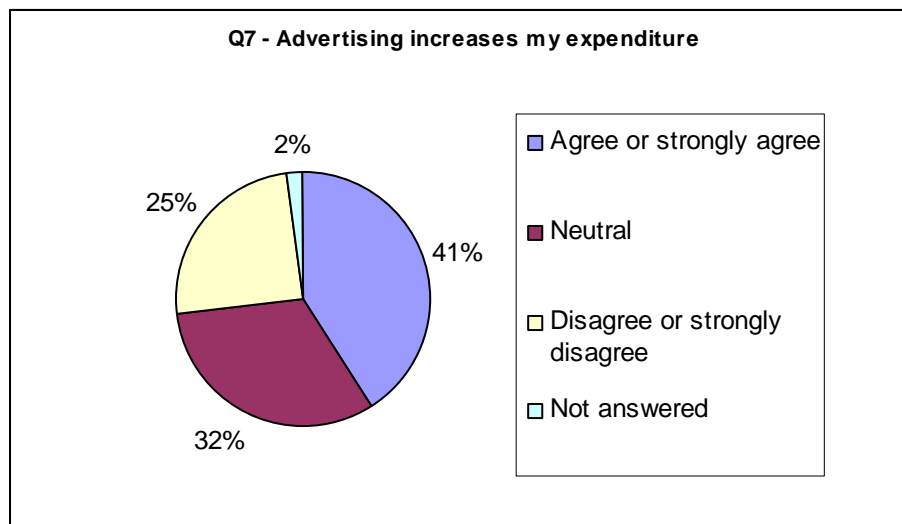


These questions – statements seven, eight and nine – were presented and answered using a Likert Scale format.

In addition, insightful and at times emotive comments from the respondents continue throughout this and the following sections because they provide a deeper understanding of the responses than the quantitative figures alone.

#### 4.3.4.1 Advertising Increases My Expenditure

Responses to the above statement are given in Figure 19 below.



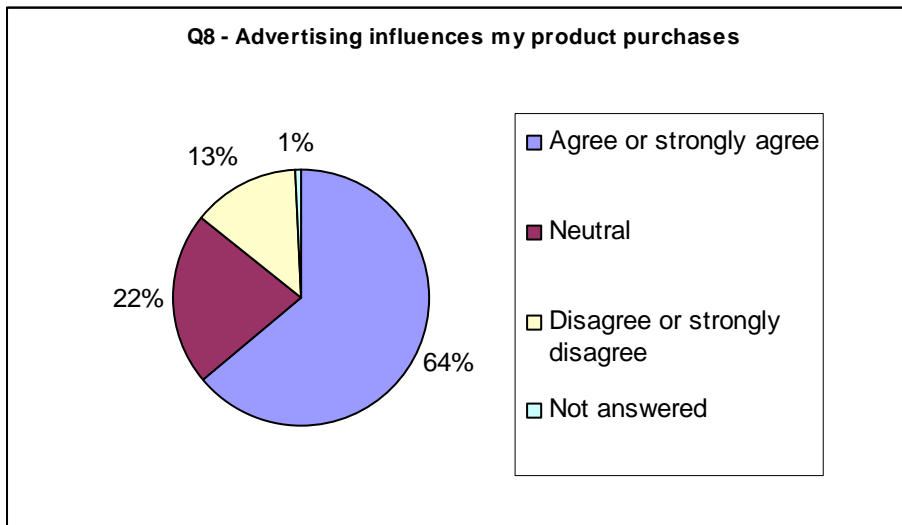
**Figure 19 - Advertising increases my expenditure**

Figure 19 shows that 41 percent, or just under half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. In contrast, a quarter of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the notion that advertising increased their expenditure.

It is paradoxical that nearly half the respondents believed advertising increased their expenditure when 65 percent said in the answer to question 6a (section 4.3.3.1) that they had not purchased a product based on advertising in the past month.

#### 4.3.4.2 Advertising Influences My Product Purchases

Responses to the above statement are given in Figure 20 on the following page.



**Figure 20 - Advertising influences my product purchases**

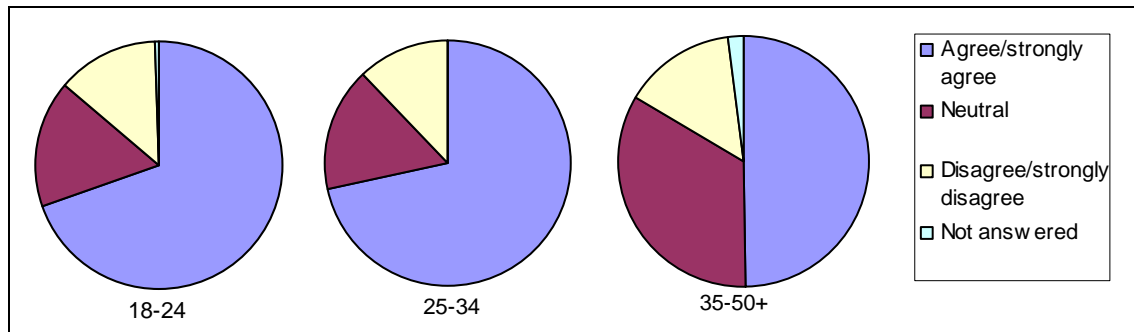
Figure 20 reveals that well over half the respondents believed that advertising influences their product purchases. However, in Question Seven (section 4.3.4.1) above, only 41 percent agreed or strongly agreed that advertising increased their expenditure. Is ‘increase of expenditure’ on advertised products not the same as, or at least very similar to, ‘product influence’? If advertising influences one’s product purchases then surely this would lead to advertising increasing overall expenditure. These two questions seem very similar and if this rhetoric runs true then the responses to these two questions should be similar.

The statement below is from a respondent in the oldest age group (35-50 plus). She believed that if she had the opportunity to buy more expensive brand she would be more influenced by advertising.

*‘I like the Dove adverts that show bigger women and women of colour – not that this has made me buy dove as I tend to buy cheaper products – but if I was buying a fancier range then I would choose Dove over the others that have skinny plastic looking models’*

The product purchases by respondents in the oldest age category are least likely to be influenced by advertising with only half of the respondents agreeing with the statement as

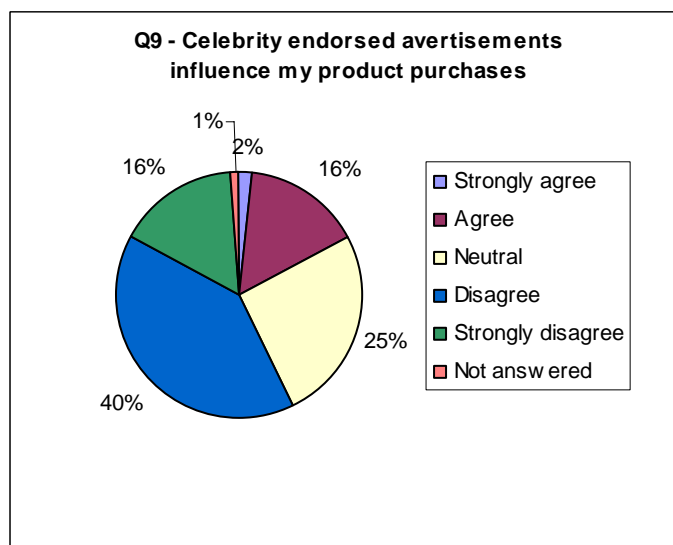
shown in Figure 21. In contrast, both younger age categories appear to be more susceptible to the influences of advertising in their product purchases. As with the results in section 4.3.3.1, this again shows the influence of advertising on younger consumers.



**Figure 21 - Responses by age category**

#### 4.3.4.3 Celebrity-Endorsed Advertisements Influence My Product Purchases

Responses to the above statement are shown in Figure 22 below.



**Figure 22 – Celebrity-endorsed advertisements influence my product purchases**

If the responses above are to be believed, it may be the end of an era for celebrities such as Kate Moss, Claudia Schiffer and Scarlet Johansson – at least as far as endorsing advertisements is concerned. Over half of the respondents – 56 percent – either disagreed or strongly disagreed that celebrity-endorsed advertisements influence their product purchases. In fact, 16 percent strongly disagreed with this statement.

This is interesting because in Part I it was found that celebrities often feature in advertising. Clearly advertisers would not use expensive celebrity images if it were not an effective advertising tool. As explained by David Titheridge, managing director of *Givenchy* in the United Kingdom;

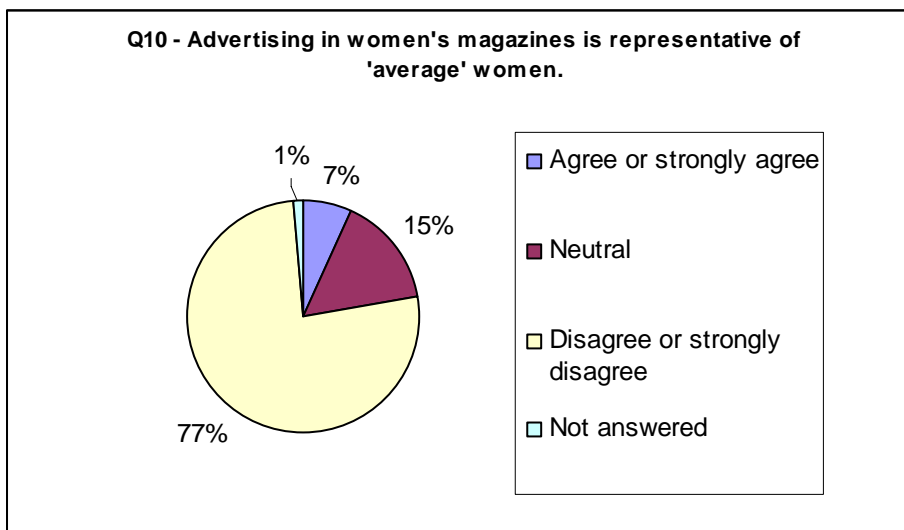
‘The right spokesperson can give a premium brand an instant link with a certain kind of lifestyle...using celebrities isn’t all about their gems-and-jets allure. They’re real people who, in our E! obsessed culture, are as familiar as family. Models, unless you’re talking Kate Moss, can’t trump that kind of recognisability rating’ (Titheridge quoted in Masters 2005: 55).

#### **4.3.5 ‘Average’ and ‘Old’?**

The next two questions asked respondents – also in the Likert Scale format – if they thought that ‘average’ women and ‘women of all ages’ are represented in advertising. These questions are paramount within this analysis because if the responses indicate that all types of women of all ages are represented then the degree of sexuality in women’s magazines is very low. Part I found that the use of ‘average’ and ‘older’ women resulted in advertisements with low sexuality ratings.

These two questions were posed here to set the respondents in the right frame of mind to answer the sexuality questions that followed in the next section.

#### 4.3.5.1 Advertising in Women's Magazines is Representative of 'Average' Women



**Figure 23 - Advertising in Women's Magazines is Representative of 'Average' Women**

Figure 23 shows that over three quarters of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement 'Advertising in women's magazines is representative of 'average' women.' Only five percent agree and just one of the nearly five-hundred respondents strongly agreed with this statement.

The term 'average' was not defined or explained in this statement. In light of this, respondents had a very strong idea of what 'average' meant, so much so that in the view of 77 percent of the respondents believed that 'average' women are not represented in women's magazine advertising. Indeed, advertising images are reflective of this view point as was found in Part I of the analysis.

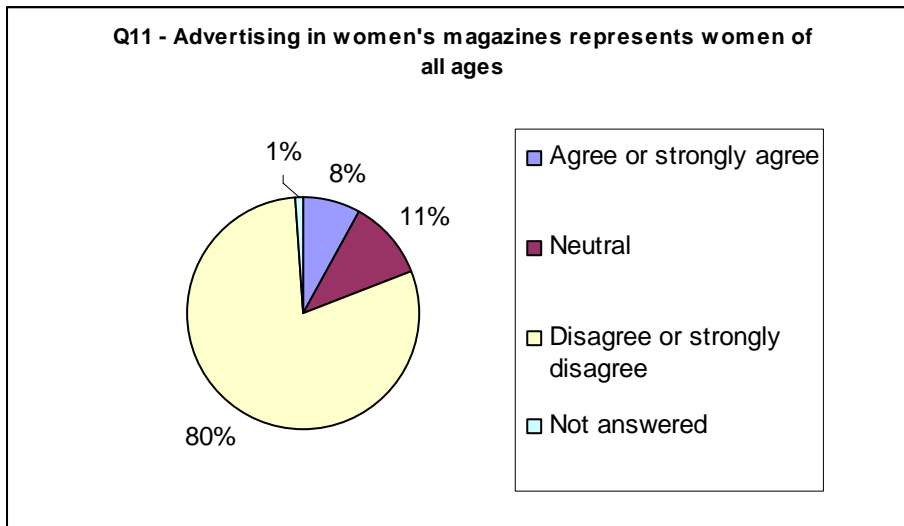
A first respondent from the oldest age category (35-50 plus), felt pressure from advertising images to purchase products to achieve the same look as the models until she realised that this would never happen because advertising is not representative of average women.

*'...I find reading such magazines make me feel like I need to start buying such items to be able to hopefully start to look the way those women look like. But then I realize, hold-on, most of these pictures/women are computer enhanced (legs elongated, wrinkles & cottage cheese removed, dark circles touched up, even tans,...) and the actual woman. I find doubting my beauty (in & out) by reading these magazines so I don't read them...'*

A second respondent from the youngest age category (18-24) approved that ‘average’ women are shown in the *Dove* campaign.

*‘I think the Dove advertising is fantastic. I like the way women of sizes/ages are not afraid to show their bodies to advertise a product’*

#### 4.3.5.2 Advertising in Women’s Magazines Represent Women of All Ages



**Figure 24 - Advertising in women's magazines represent women of all ages**

Figure 24 reveals that eighty percent of respondents ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ with the statement ‘advertising in women’s magazines represents women of all ages.’ Only seven percent of respondents agreed with this statement.

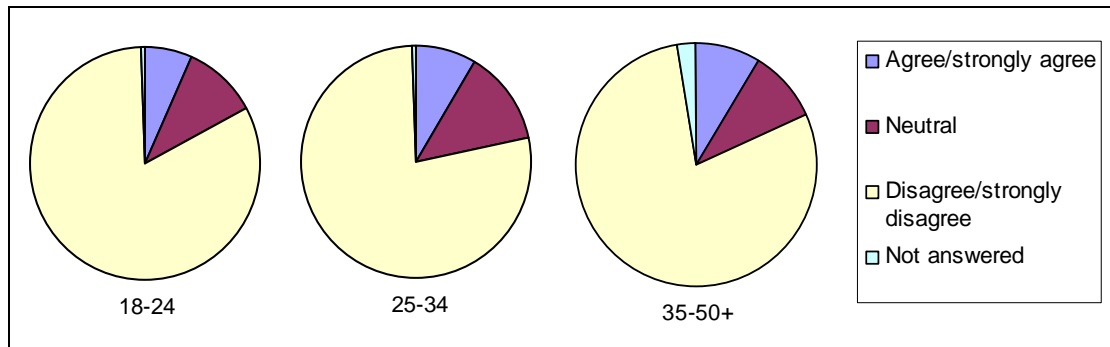
A respondent from the oldest age category (35-50 plus) comments on how her age group is not represented in advertising.

*‘I am fat, approaching 60, I do not relate to any images of young sexy women, they turn me off the products. They make me regret my lost youth and as a result I become hostile to their product. The males portrayed are not the ones that we would ever come across and have no resemblance to my balding darling. The models need to more normal, older and less sculptured/airbrushed to be believable’*

Another respondent from the same age category holds similar views.

*'I would love to see more REAL women used, they look fabulous. I hate looking at photo's of plastic girls trying to sell me products to improve my skin at (42!) when they barely have a blemish left on their faces and are still pre-pubescent'*

It should be noted that while women in the oldest age category wished to voice their opinions, the view that advertising does not represent women of all ages is held by women of all ages as shown below in Figure 25.



**Figure 25 - Responses to question 11 by age category**

A case study of the representation of age in women's magazine advertising is included at the end of this analysis in section 4.3.9.

### 4.3.6 Responses to use of Sex in Advertising

This set of questions highlights the crux of this research. Respondents were asked directly to pass judgement about the degree of sexuality with regards to the representation of women, as well as the appropriateness of product placement.

Specifically, questions 12 and 13 asked women to view the images on the following page and indicate responses to two statements in the Likert Scale format.



#### 4.3.6.1 I think the women are represented in a sexual way

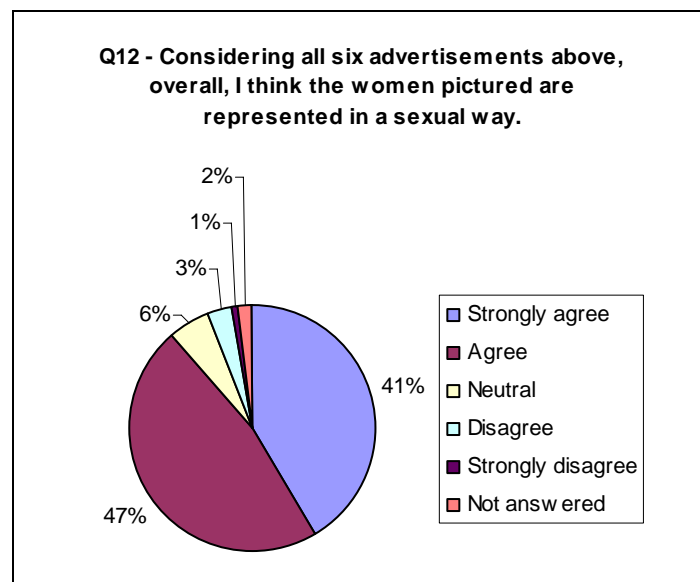


Figure 26 - I think the women pictured are represented in a sexual way



‘I think the women pictured are represented in a sexual way’ is a central question posed within this research. Figure 26 reveals that with reference to the six images above 88 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Just three out of nearly 500 strongly disagreed.

This section got a high number of emotionally-charged comments. One of the respondents from the youngest age category (18-24) found the images quite offensive.

*‘I find most of the images presented in this survey as highly abusive of women. Why are they using the female body in a sexual way to advertise female products? Most of the images are soft porn to men and I am unsure how that helps sell products to females’*

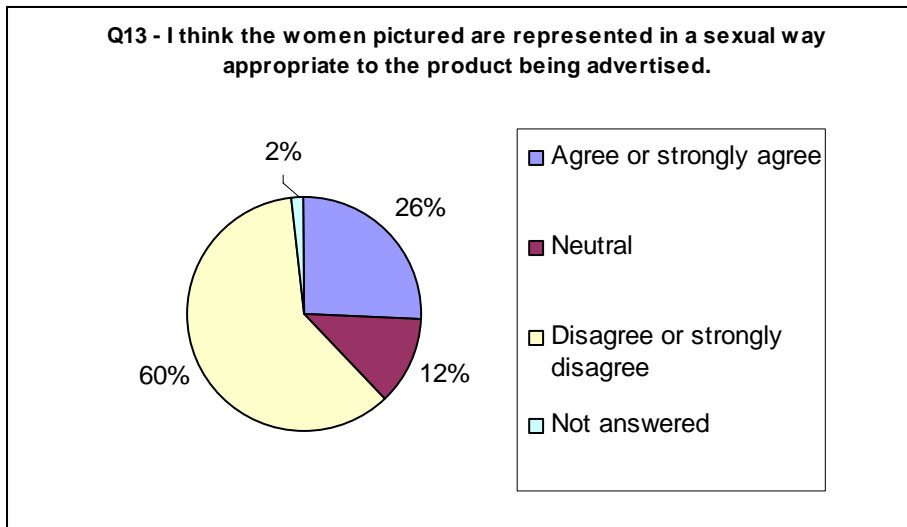
A number of respondents held similar views. It is surprising that many of these responses derives from the youngest demographic. It was assumed that this type of response would mainly derive from the oldest demographic who are most marginalised by the media. This is reflected in section 4.3.5.2 where 80 percent of respondents said they believe that women of all ages are not fairly portrayed in advertising, and further outlined in a case study of ‘Old Age in Women’s Magazine Advertising’ in section 4.3.9.

A respondent from the 25 - 34 age category commented on how sex is referred to too often in advertising.

*‘Sex is used far too much to sell stuff – images and words. I’ve heard of a shade of pink paper described as sexy. It’s paper! There’s nothing sexy about it. It’s all just unnecessary – the Guess ads are pointless.’*

This respondent made a passing comment about the *Guess* advertising campaign. This was identified in Part I of the analysis as the most sexual brand overall.

#### 4.3.6.2 I think the women pictured are represented in a sexual way appropriate to the product being advertised



**Figure 27 - Women are pictured in a sexual way appropriate to the product**

Figure 27 shows that well over half of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the women pictured in the images above were represented in a sexual way appropriate to the product being advertised.

In some of the six advertisements that respondents were shown, one needs to question if the female models are being used merely as sexual props to enhance the product. This can be seen in the *Guess* advertisement where the model's legs and crutch area seem to be the focus of the advertisement and not the eyewear being advertised.

In others, such as in the *Ralph Lauren* fragrance advertisement, varying degrees of sexuality are interlaced throughout the image in an attractive and or innovative way. The name of the fragrance – *Romance* – ties in beautifully with the black and white image of the man and woman who through their pose signify the notion of a romantic relationship.

Comments below, from two respondents from the middle (25-34) and oldest (35-50 plus) age categories respectively find the use of varying degrees of sexuality as inappropriate and unnecessary for product promotion.

*'I find it incredible in this day and age when women are supposedly considered equal to men etc. that we are exposed, exploited in advertising by the way that our bodies are used to promote countless products. It just makes me so angry! In both the*

*Guess and L'Oreal ads women's bodies are used to promote the product in an inappropriate way. I mean what has the women's pornographic pose in the guess ad got to do the product? What is the ad for anyway? A watch? Swimwear? Sunglasses? Or Playboy? Honestly, it makes me want to raise my children in a vacuum.'*

*'I avoid supporting products advertised in a sexual way as much as possible because I don't agree with it!!!!'*

#### 4.3.7 Ranking of Images

In question 14, the final question of the survey, respondents were asked to rank six images (shown below) from most sexual to least sexual. This question is directly related to Part I of the analysis and highlights if the results from Part I correlate with the responses in Part II.



(a)



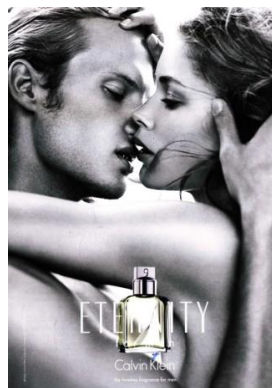
(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)

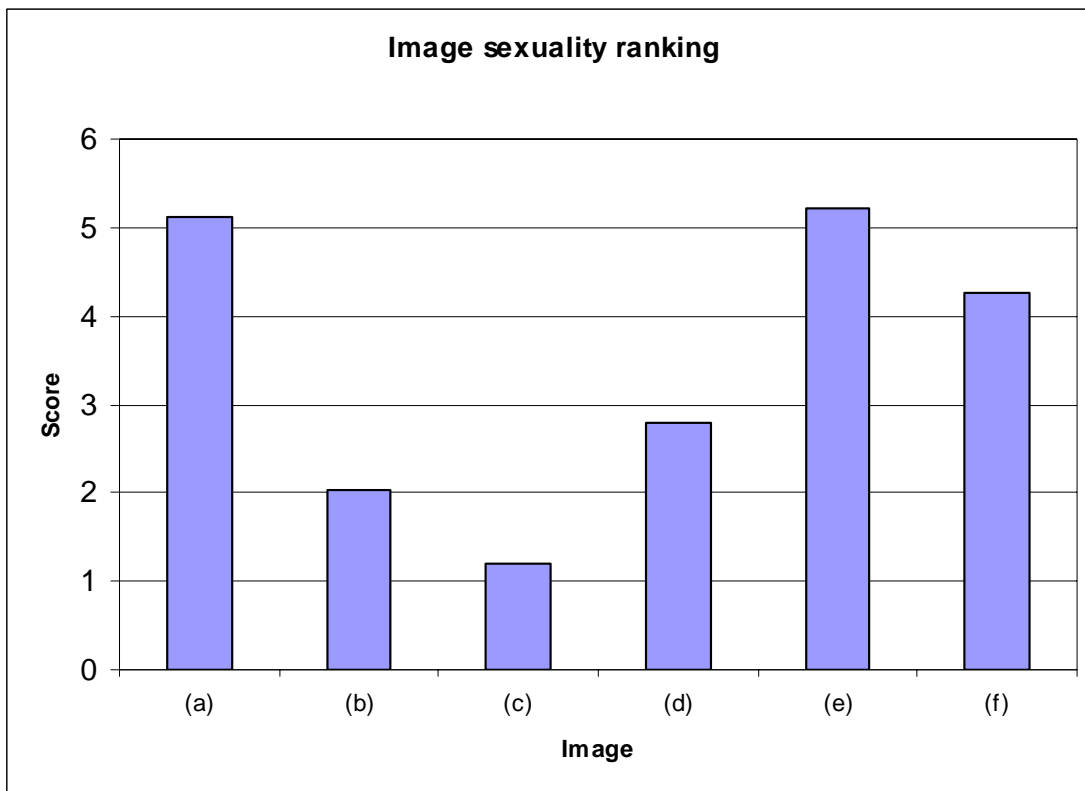
The following sections outline how the responses to this question were collated, then presents and discusses the results.

#### 4.3.7.1 Method of ranking

To combine and summarise the respondents' rankings the following analysis was used:

Each time a respondent ranked an image 'first' it was assigned six points. Five points were assigned to an image ranked 'second' and so on down to one point for the image that a respondent thought was least-sexual. By adding up the points for each image and dividing by the number of respondents, an average score for each image was obtained. This is taking the arithmetic mean score or 'mid-point of the distribution' (Hardy 2004:44) for each advertisement, a simple but effective statistical analysis technique.

The results of this ranking are summarised in Figure 28.



**Figure 28 - Ranking of images**

It can be seen that respondents thought image (e) was most sexual, closely followed by image (a), with image (f) third. Images (d) and (b) were found to be fourth and fifth most sexual and image (c) sixth, or least sexual.

Figure 29 shows that the image sexuality rank order preference is shared by respondents across the three age categories. There is a slight variation in image (f) where respondents

from the oldest age category find the aspect of fragmentation to be slightly more sexualised.

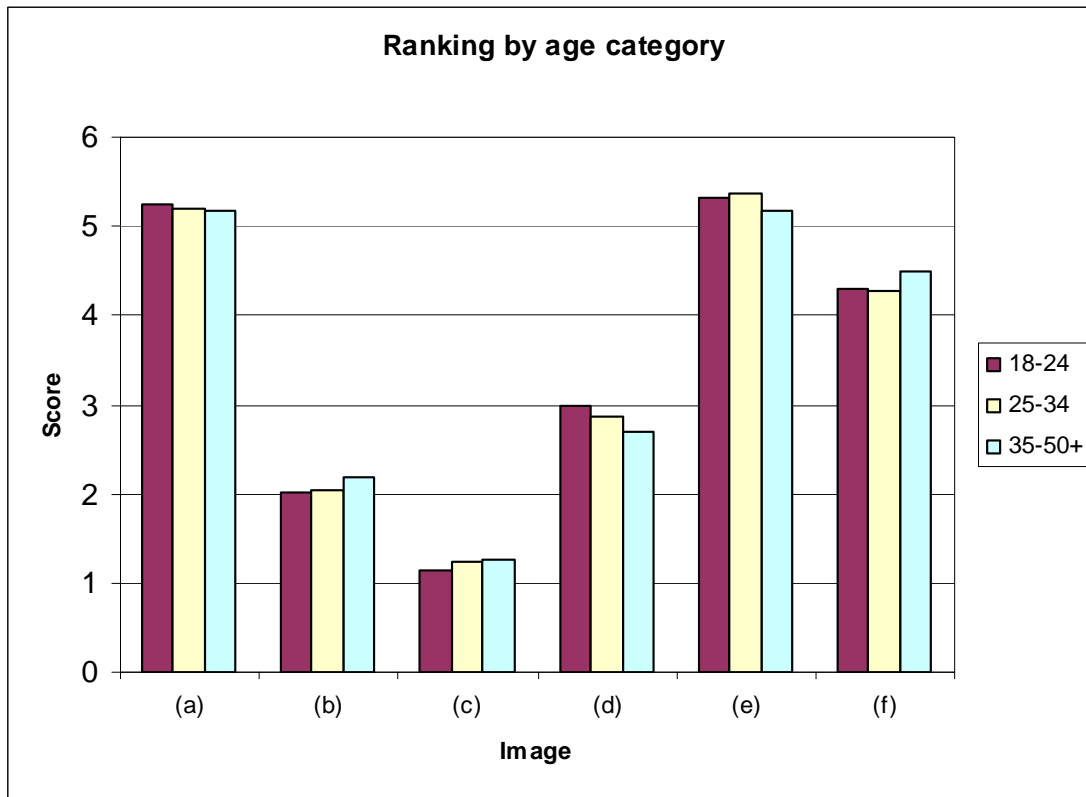


Figure 29 - Ranking of images by age category

#### 4.3.7.2 Most Sexual Images

Figure 28 showed that respondents found image (e) to be the most sexual, although only slightly more than image (a).

This finding is at odds with the results from the advertising analysis in Part I of this research. Those findings show that image (e) was not one of the top ten most sexual advertisements. It was discussed in section 3.5.8 of Part I as one of the images that was under-represented in terms of its sexuality due to the fact that it did not score well across all nine categories in the coding schedule.

Survey respondents probably found this image as the most sexual image overall because it depicts a man and a woman in the throws of sexual intimacy. This is traditionally seen as very sexual as discussed in Part I. Such images were however rarely found in the women's magazines analysed.

The image that was found to be second most sexual by respondents was image (a). In Part I of the analysis of over 5000 advertisements, image (a) was found to be the *most* sexual image overall, significantly more sexual than image (e). Image (a) scored 8.4 out of 10 in terms of its degree of sexuality rating while image (e) scored just 5.6. Image (a) depicts a much sexualized woman; however she is not partaking in an intimate sexual act as in image (e).

Figure 28 also showed that respondents found image (f) to be the third-most sexual image. It is a classic example of fragmentation – dismembering of a woman’s body into specific (generally sexual) parts. This faceless depiction objectifies women. This analysis has found that this is a tool often used in advertising, especially for beauty products, as discussed in detail in section 3.3.1.7 of Part I.

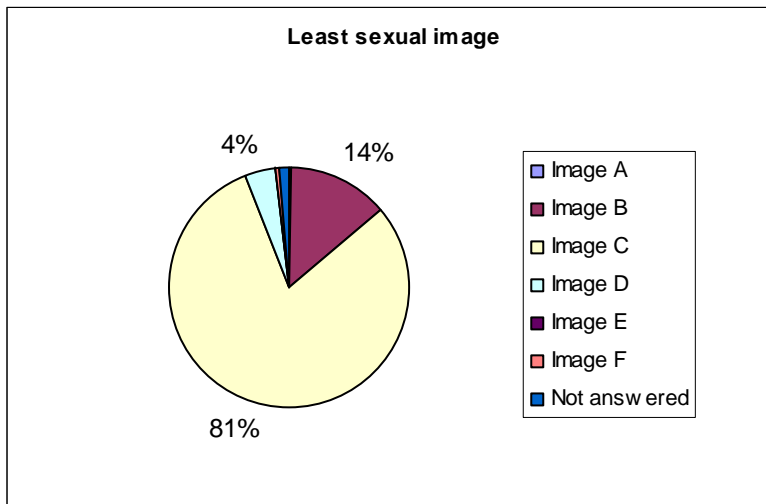
A respondent from the 25-34 year age category, comments on how she disagrees with the objectification of women in advertising:

*‘I find it interesting how women claim to be so much more emancipated and empowered in the modern world, yet are still objectified in much the same ways they always have been, and I don’t see any moves towards change. Makes me sad for the younger generation following us’*

Overall, considering these three most sexual images, the results above show that respondents viewed the portrayal of intimacy between a man and woman the most sexual, but only slightly more than a scantily clad woman. The respondents found both images to be far more sexual than a faceless model’s half-naked behind.

Noting the limitations identified in Part I, where men and women in a sexual pose were inadequately represented by the construct of the coding schedule, these results are largely reflective of the sexuality rankings of this earlier analysis.

#### 4.3.7.3 Least Sexual Images



**Figure 30 - Least sexual image**

Figure 28 showed that the majority of respondents identified image (c) - of the older woman - as the least sexual. In fact, as shown in Figure 30, 81 percent identified it as the least sexual image of the six. It was shown in section 4.3.5.2 that fifty-five percent of respondents thought that women of all ages were not represented in advertising and yet here an over-whelming number of the same respondents believed that the image with the older women was the least sexual.

Image (b), of a woman in an 'active shot' partaking in a sporting activity, was picked by respondents as the second-least sexual advertisement. This is reflective of the results from Part I of the analysis where images such as this received very low sexuality scores.

For a long time, women in women's magazine advertising have been portrayed in traditional, static model-type poses as discussed in section 3.3.1.3 of Part I. These results show that this portrayal may long continue if women's perceptions do not change. Advertisers will after all respond to the perceptions of their readers.

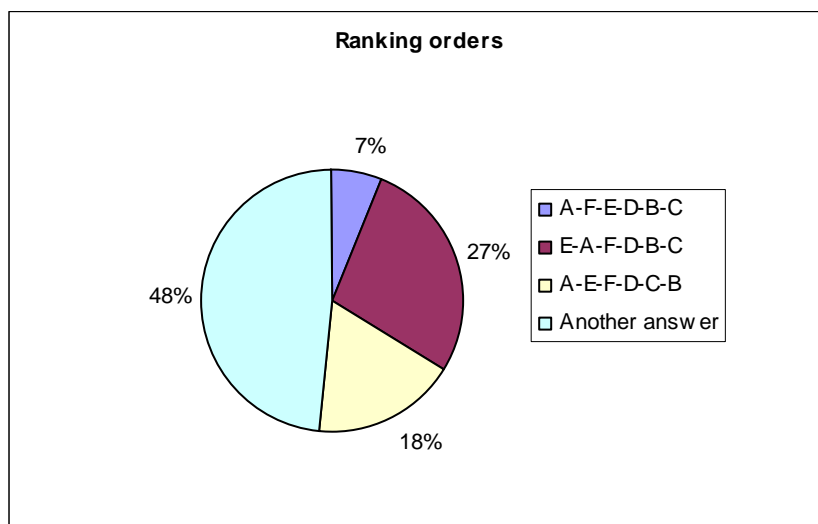
In section 4.3.5.1, 77 percent of respondents did not believe that 'average' women were represented in advertising. Yet as was shown in Figure 28, image (d) was identified as the third least sexual image. This advertisement from the Dove campaign is representative of 'average' women who have been portrayed in a slightly sexual way. In Part I of this analysis this advertisement received an above average degree of sexuality rating. It received above average to high scores for five out of the nine categories – nakedness,

shoes/clothing, pose/sexual pose, colour/text and action shot vs. still shot. However, respondents did deem this to be a sexual image even though it had all the criteria to be one even with the use of ‘average’ women.

The discussion and analysis of these three least sexual images reveals that for the majority of respondents, older, active and ‘average’ women were not viewed in a sexual light, even though in preceding questions respondents claimed that such images of women were under represented in women’s magazine advertising. However, the reality of seeing such images indicates that women are in fact their own harshest critics.

#### 4.3.7.4 Ranking orders

Figure 31 shows the most common ranking orders chosen for the six images by respondents.



**Figure 31 - Ranking orders chosen**

It can be seen that the most popular ranking order was E-A-F-D-B-C – the same as the average ranking based on all respondents combined. This ranking order was selected by just over one quarter of all respondents and is shown on the following page.





The second most popular ranking order, chosen by 18 percent of respondents, is A-E-F-D-C-B, as shown below:



Images (f) and (d) are in the same place as they were in the most popular ranking order and the action shot, image (b) is considered to be less sexual by these respondents than the image of the older woman.

#### 4.3.8 Summary of Rankings and Comments

From the comments spaced throughout this results section it can be gauged that generally women feel that the use of varying degrees of sexuality is not fairly representative of women. From this it can be determined that sex in advertising is seen negatively as was shown in Question 6b) only a small portion of women found this to be positive and an attractive aspect of advertizing. Many respondents also believed that ‘average’ and older women were not represented in the media.

It is interesting to note that most of the comments inserted throughout Part II of this analysis were made by women from the oldest age category (35-50 plus). Respondents in this category left the greatest number of comments plus they tended to provide the most thought-provoking as well as subject appropriate comments. These were selected by the researcher in a purely qualitative manner. This high rate of commenting could be reflective of the fact that respondents from the oldest demographic had either, a) the time and inclination to respond to the survey or b) because they are the minority shown in advertising they felt that they had the most to contribute.

The *Guess* advertisements were often referred to as being too sexual and even described by respondents as ‘pointless’ on some occasions. This is interesting because Part I of the analysis found a *Guess* advertisement to be the most sexual overall according to the categories and ratings within the coding schedule. The *Guess* advertisements were also found to be the most sexual brand overall. Yet in Part II, respondents voted the *Calvin Klein Eternity* fragrance advertisement as the most sexual – more sexual than the *Guess* advertisement.

The repetitive comments throughout Part II about negative sexual portrayal of women in the *Guess* advertisements point to the hypothesis that even though respondents may not have found the *Guess* advertisement to be the most sexual, they may have found it to be the most disturbing and provocative. The provocative nature of these images may have pushed some of the respondents out of their comfort zones, as has been seen in comments throughout this analysis.

The *Calvin Klein* advertisement relies heavily on normalised heterosexual relations that signify a form of passionate relationship. This type of image is likely to be more easily accepted by respondents due to those cultural norms and remains within their comfort zones. Moreover, it provides a clear pathway of understanding of the purpose of the advertisement. In contrast, the *Guess* advertisements are filled with ambiguity. They represent women in a vamp-like manner, similar to that of soft porn. This imagery does not provide a guide to the purpose of the advertisement. Instead it makes it difficult to determine which product is being promoted. This ambiguity appears to have resulted in some form of disturbance for a number of the respondents who may have found these advertisements difficult to define as sexual because they did not follow cultural norms. This shows that the *Guess* campaign was in essence successful because it was recollected by consumers. For the most part, this campaign was viewed in a negative light by respondents but in advertising terms any form of recollection is a sign of success.

A final comment from one of the respondents, an 18-24 year old female from Christchurch who seems to be concerned about most aspects of advertising, as well as the degrees of sexuality used in women’s magazines. She focuses on the negative portrayal of women in the *Guess* advertisements.

*'I am always most put off by Guess ads. They ooze way too much sexuality for what they are advertising. But sex at such a level I don't believe the average reader could really relate to or even aspire to. Some of the models are so sickeningly gaunt...I cannot look at a Guess ad and feel connected in anyway, it makes me feel like I'm not one of the glamorous crowd and rubs it in my face as if to say you never could be one of the elitist league. What a paradox when the point of advertising is to appeal the targeted consumer of the magazine. Is that consumer someone that looks like sex on a stick and has a full wallet to buy Guess watches or underwear? What then is the real message behind the bling? Are we trying to separate economic classes of women through advertising, not only make them feel inadequate about their body image but also about their pockets implying that it takes an expensive product to make a women feel beautiful! You don't got the doe, you don't get the mojo my friend.'*

#### **4.3.9 Case Study – Old Age in Women's Magazine Advertising**

'The dominant contemporary Western response to aging is of repression; the ageing female body is 'unwatchable', and so strategies must be found to conceal or counter the outward signs of aging...Youthful appearance is at a premium, and so visible aging is particularly problematised for older women' (Woodward 1999, cited in Coupland 2003: 129).'

This 'repression' in the form of advertising occurs on two levels; the saturation of media space portraying young, thin models, as well as bombarding women with an array of anti-aging products that as Coupland (2003) found, are targeted at women as young as their late twenties. The aged female face and body seems to be considered to be unattractive and is often marginalised – if not completely ousted – in advertising in women's magazines. This marginalisation makes 'older' appear unfamiliar in the media setting. This unfamiliarity can lead to perceptions that older women are less attractive and therefore less sexual, which points to a de-sexualisation of the older female face and body.

In this study of over 5000 advertisements, only two featured older women. However, these do not include the Dove advertisements as discussed in the literature review. In this case 'older' refers to women in their sixties, seventies and eighties – predominantly retirees. It is as if this demographic of women have ceased to exist within this medium. The two advertisements featuring older women are shown on the following page.



(a)



(b)

It was assumed that titles in Part I aimed at the oldest demographic (35-50 plus) would feature older women in their advertising to appeal to their target demographic. However, the analysis found that youthful models - lithe and slender teenage girls and young women - were used and dominated throughout each of the three demographics. Advertisement (a) derives from *Next* magazine, aimed at the oldest demographic, while advertisement (b) was featured a number of times in *Cosmopolitan*, the most sexual title overall, and aimed at the youngest demographic (18-24). However, it should be noted that advertisement (b) does not seem to be celebrating or promoting the positive aspects of aging, rather age is used in a condescending manner.

Advertisement (a) is for 'Avana' which is an age defying formula. The text in the advertisement acknowledges that the progression of age hinders the beauty process; 'Time is a great healer but a lousy beautician.' The text is placed alongside an older woman – perhaps in her early 70s – who appears quite striking and attractive for her age. It is presumed that the text is meant to be understood that through using 'Avana' the consumer will look just as good as the model in the advertisement in her later years. However, the text also seems to distract from the model's own beauty, suggesting that she did not age so gracefully of her own accord but instead required artificial assistance through the use of the product.

Moreover, in Part II of this analysis, women were asked to rank a series of advertisements in order of degree of sexuality. The respondents rated advertisement (a), above, the lowest by a long margin as was discussed in detail in section 4.3.7.3.

So not only was this image of an older woman found to be least sexual in the rigid construct of the Part I analysis, but real women also found it to be least sexual in a range of advertisements.

Other advertisements were found in the analysis that featured much younger women – although still perceived as older in advertising terms. These women appeared to be in their thirties, forties and fifties and were portrayed in advertisements for an array of anti-aging products. Examples of some of these advertisements are shown below.



(d)



(e)



(f)

Advertisements (d), (e) and (f) all share definitive characteristics. They each feature a celebrity – Andie MacDowell and Claudia Schiffer – with arrows running across their faces signifying how the anti-aging product will (supposedly) counter the aging process.

The tone of such advertisements is often authoritative. According to Goffman, ‘ideologies about the ageing face and body are communicated at times through ambiguous authorship, which makes it unclear whose voice is ‘speaking’’ (1981: 144). This ambiguous nature could accredit the ‘voice’ of the advertisement to the celebrity used in the image.

Another anti-aging product advertisement ((g) shown on the following page), is not of a celebrity’s face with arrows running across it. Instead, it shows half a woman’s smiling face and in the background an outline of her body jumping with arms and legs outstretched.



(g)

These four images share some common factors. They are all highly fragmented and yet received below average degrees in sexuality. Apart from advertisement (g) they make aging appear, not as a time of life-long earned relaxation, but of more hard work – not in the form of employment and child rearing – in the form of hiding behind a guise of youthfulness though the consumption of anti-aging products. According to Richardson ‘our culture teaches us to admire youthful strength and beauty’ and older is deemed ‘as the polar opposite of the youthful ideal’ (1998: 144).

Part I of the analysis found that other advertisements featuring comparatively older women – in their 30s and 40s – were also featured throughout the analysis. These were not for anti-aging face and body products but for clothing, shampoos and so forth. Throughout Part I it was determined that the majority of these advertisements were not the same ‘exciting,’ memorable, risqué campaigns like those that featured younger models. In Part I of the analysis a case study (section 3.5.13.1) revealed how clothing is advertised differently across the demographics, with different types and ages of models used. However, one could flick through one of the magazines analysed in Part I and still encounter advertisements featuring women in their 30s and even 40s posed in memorable and even risqué advertisements. Indeed, there is a whole array of such advertisements featuring women such as Elizabeth Hurley, Nicole Kidman, Kylie Minogue, Victoria Beckham, Meg Ryan amongst countless others – who all share celebrity status. They may be considered to be slightly older in the world of advertising but their celebrity status means they are not representative of ‘average’ older women. Perhaps advertisers feel that for advertisements featuring older women they need a recognisable face, while those featuring younger women can rely on the higher degree of sexuality to draw attention.

Two older celebrities and faces of Revlon cosmetics – Susan Sarandon (59) and Julianne Moore (45) – readily acknowledge and even celebrate their age. They were featured in advertisement (h), below, that appeared throughout Part I of the analysis.



(g)

The above is an advertisement for ‘age defying’ foundation make-up and age-appropriate celebrity women are used to promote the product.

Moore was asked to be the spokeswoman of Revlon at 40 years of age, while Sarandon joined at 58. This is surprising considering many cosmetic brands tend to reinvent their image with younger spokespeople to prevent their brands from aging – ‘Lancôme got rid of Isabella Rossellini when she hit 43’ (Krum 2005: 14-15). ‘A new [younger] front-woman can be invaluable when helping a brand to reinvent itself’ (Masters 2005: 56).

In an interview published in *The Australian Women’s Weekly*, Sarandon revealed that she wanted to use the opportunity as a Revlon spokesperson to help change perceptions on ageing and beauty in a culture where women are bombarded with images of much younger models. “The message that you become worth-less as you age has become part of our culture...but beauty is not a number” (Krum 2005: 16). Moore shares a similar outlook to Sarandon. A year later, she was interviewed by the same publication and was dismayed at the standards of ‘perfection’;

“There is so much illusion in photographs and movies. I know an actress who was looking at photo in a magazine and said, ‘why don’t I look like that?’ – and then she realised it was a picture of herself” (Moore as quoted in Newman 2006: 38)



It should be noted that both Sarandon and Moore are not exactly representative of ‘average’ older women. However, even with this being the case, at least it is a step in the right direction for advertisers and advertising in women’s magazines. Through the use of age-appropriate models for some of the campaigns it acknowledges that ‘very young’ is not the only age available to women.

This case study has explored the reasons why Part I of the analysis saw so few advertisements of older women. Perhaps ‘looking your age’ will become a future celebrity fad. This may in turn result in advertising portraying older women.

Some final words for thought from Sarandon; “there’s something to be said for looking good – but looking your age” (quoted in Krum 2005: 18).

#### **4.3.10 Summary of Results**

From the results above, some patterns and common themes have emerged in the women’s responses to sexuality in advertising.

Firstly, the respondents reflected an almost even cross-section of age categories, which is rare in social research.

It appeared in some of the results that respondents either not too familiar with advertising or are not as media savvy as they would like to believe. For example, in section 4.3.4.2 the majority of respondents believed that advertising influenced their product purchases. Yet under half of the respondents agreed that advertising increased their expenditure (section 4.3.4.1). The similarities of these questions were intentionally included but such different answers were not anticipated. This shows that perhaps advertising is more influential than acknowledged.

An overwhelming majority of respondents – across the age categories – indicated that they believed that ‘average’ women and women of all ages were under-represented in advertising messages. Emotional comments throughout the analysis backed up this view point.

In addition, a cocktail for recollection of advertising emerged – the ‘promise’ of an advertisement, specific advertising features and inclusion of sexuality. The latter is



interesting. The varying degrees of sexuality in women's magazines are often contested in society and as the respondents expressed are often seen as debateable and 'sore points' for many viewers. However, in spite all of this, 'sex' in any way, shape or form is an aspect of advertising that more often than not is remembered. This is in essence the heart of advertising.

---

## 4.4 Understanding Interpretation of Advertising

---

As part of the online survey, respondents were asked to view a number of advertisements and answer specific questions, as well as rank them in degree of sexuality from most to least sexual. The results and discussion section above showed that interpretations were quite similar across the three age categories. This is interesting considering that varying perceptions of cultural norms are likely to be held by women of different ages. This expectation is not reflected in the findings. In order to interpret this result an understanding of the structure of advertising is necessary.

This section explains how media messages such as advertisements are constructed and interpreted through the use of visual and textual elements. These elements reflect cultural norms within society and act as signifiers for abstract ideologies that are often adopted by advertisers. Furthermore, it is these signifiers that influence the reader's perceptions. An understanding of these tools used by advertisers allows us to gain greater insight into the responses received and how they varied across the demographics.

All media messages are polysemic – open to dominant, oppositional and negotiated meanings – subject to varying interpretations (McQuail 2000: 492). Therefore, advertising images are decoded differently by each individual and not all viewers receive the dominant message intended by the advertiser. Theories such as Hall's 'Encoding and Decoding' support the polysemy of messages which contribute to the notion of the audience as active and not merely cultural dupes that accept media messages at face value (Hall 2000: 51-61). In terms of advertising, it may be somewhat simplistically assumed that the purchase of an advertised product is indicative of a dominant understanding while no purchase may be indicative of an oppositional stance. A negotiated meaning lies somewhere in between.

These meanings can be interpreted through the application of semiotics. According to linguist Ferdinand de Saussure – one of the founding fathers of semiology – semiotics could be perceived as '*a science that studies the life of signs within society*' (1966: 67-117)). Essentially, de Saussure believed that signs consisted of two components: a *signifier* (a sound or object) and a *signified* (a concept or idea) and that the 'relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, based on convention' (Berger 2003:

34). Semiotics and their arbitrary nature are also well explained by semiotician, Umberto Eco;

‘Semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign. A sign is everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else. This something else does not necessarily have to exist or to actually be somewhere at the moment in which a sign stands for it’ (Eco 1976: 7 cited in Berger 2003).

For example; a single red rose pictured in an advertisement is the concrete signifier, while the concept that it stands for - love or a token of love - is the abstract signified. De Saussure was interested in the idea of ‘concepts’ which ‘have meaning because of the web of relationships in which they are found; they don’t have meaning by themselves...the meaning of everything has to be learned’ (Berger 2003: 35). This means that our understanding of advertising messages needs to be learned from our cultural norms, surroundings and associations to be completely understood.

Advertising images are further understood through the denotation and connotation of signs. Denotations are relatively stable and refer to the literal meaning of a sign. In contrast, connotations refer to abstract symbolic meanings which require the reader to have an awareness of cultural codes – a certain level of cultural nous – that tie signifiers to signifieds and thereby produce meaning. According to professor of media studies, Jostein Gripsrud;

‘Signs of all sorts are always used and perceived in concrete historical, social and cultural situations, and even if most denotative meanings are more or less constant the variation of connotative meanings is of great importance to all sorts of communication. Connotative meanings are, just as denotative ones, regulated by codes, the conventions that link signifiers to signifieds. The notion of ‘code’ is therefore the key to the pragmatic dimension of semiology, since it is tied to certain cultural communities that share the conventions in question. *Culture*, can, at least in this context, simply be defined as a *community of codes*’ (Gripsrud 2002: 105).

These apparent ‘community of codes’ are reflected in and featured throughout advertising to reflect the given culture to which they are attributed to and also parts of which (culture) they (the advertisements) are trying to attract.

Cultural codes and conventions are further conveyed in women’s magazines through the use of various photographic techniques such as lighting and camera angles. ‘Different camera shots and editing techniques function as signs, or cues...that tell them [the viewer] what to think and feel, and these cues are based on aesthetic codes people learn’ (Berger 2003: 38). For example, a close-up photograph of a model’s head and shoulders (the signifier) often reflects intimacy (the signified), while an extreme close-up of only part of her face (signifier) – known as fragmentation – infers inspection (signified) and objectification (ibid:39). These types of photographic techniques soon become common knowledge and second nature because ‘advertising makes this order known and enforces it’ (Luhmann 2000: 50) time and again through its repetitive nature and unavoidable dissemination.

These techniques are applied more to some product types than to others, as explained below.

#### 4.4.1 Types of Products

The semiotics and photographic techniques used largely depend on the types of products being advertised. ‘Goods are either “thinking” or “feeling” goods and consumers have either “high involvement” or “low involvement” with them’ (Schudson 1993: 51). This is further explained in the Table 17 below.

**Table 17 – Product involvement (Schudson 1993:51)**

	<b>Thinking</b>	<b>Feeling</b>
<b>High Involvement:</b>	Car, house, furniture, workmanship tools	Jewellery, cosmetics, apparel, motorcycles
<b>Low Involvement:</b>	Food, household items	Cigarettes, liquor, candy

Part I of the analysis essentially found that everyday, ‘low involvement’ and ‘thinking’ items such as household products, conveyed for the most part dull, unmemorable impressions. According to Schudson (1993) these function as ‘remainder’ advertisements for consumers and not much else. This classification of advertisement predominantly featured in titles aimed at the oldest demographic. In contrast, ‘high involvement’ and ‘feeling’ products ‘emphasize mood, image or emotion’ (ibid: 51). These types of advertisements were featured often throughout the 141 analysed issues.

In general, advertisements for ‘high involvement’ and ‘feeling’ products utilise a high degree of sexuality. Fragrance, arguably one of the highest involvement and feeling products was the product category that was found in Part I to have the most sexual advertisements. Low involvement products tended to receive very low sexuality ratings

In these advertisements semiotics and photographic techniques were relied upon to convey cultural conventions and abstract ideologies. These types of advertisements were a focal point in Part I analysis because they were featured very often, especially in the youngest and middle age categories. Generally, these types of advertising was used for cosmetic, fragrance and clothing products. There are defined as more of a ‘lifestyle want’ and not a ‘functional need’ type of product.

The frequency of these types of advertisements analysed in Part I point to specific consumer types as outlined below.

#### **4.4.2 Types of Consumers**

The product range outlined above, points to specific types of consumers of women’s magazine advertisements. Advertisers have long used demographic segmentation methods to appeal to their target demographics as outlined in section 3.2.1 of Part I. To gain greater engagement of their target demographics, advertisers often use ‘psychographic segmentation – that is, appealing to consumer groups of varying lifestyles, attitudes, values, and behaviour patterns’ (Baran 1999: 306-307).

These character attributes divide consumers into three main consumer types; the ‘Need-Driven’, ‘Outer-Directed’ and Inner-Directed’ (ibid: 307). Nine specific categories referred to as VALS (devised by SRI International) further divide consumers into

sub-categories within the three main consumer types outlined above. There are the ‘survivors, sustainers, belongers, emulators, achievers, I-Am-Me’s, experimental, societally conscious, and Integrated (ibid: 307).

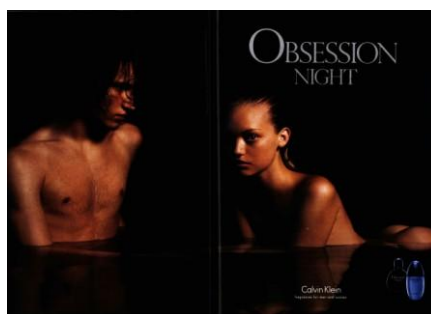
From these nine categories, three apply directly to the types of consumers who read women’s magazines and perhaps purchase the advertised products. These are listed below as described by Baran (1999). The first two fall under the ‘Outer-Directed’ consumer category and the last one is classified as ‘Inner-Directed’.

- *Emulators*: Ambitious, macho, upwardly mobile; urban, young, moderate income; into “in” items, imitation, and conspicuous consumption.
- *Achievers*: Materialistic, want success, fame, and comfort; suburban and urban, excellent income, good education; buy top of the line, use products to demonstrate success; buy luxury, gift, and innovative items.
- *I-Am-Me*: Individualistic, dramatic, impulsive, experimental; young, single, student or beginning job; buy to display tastes, experiment with fads, like the far-out.

The first and third categories appear to apply to the youngest age category (18-24) who may not have a high income but are keen to try to new things that are shown in advertisements. They are likely to be attracted to ambiguous advertisements (image (a) and (b) below) where the cultural codes are difficult to determine, and also to ‘loud’ and catchy advertisements such as image (c).



(a)



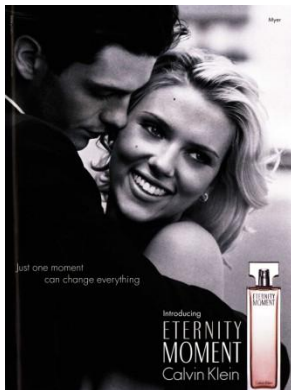
(b)



(c)

All of the above advertisements are slightly different and require a second and even third glance for their meanings to be understood as their level of signification is unclear. This would possibly be attractive to the *Emulators*, and especially attractive to the *I-Am-Me* consumer types.

Both of these groups of consumers are likely to mature into *Achievers*, who presumably favour glamorous and branded advertisements that convey status, as well as quality. The semiotic construction of these types of advertisements would most likely adhere to easily understood and accepted cultural conventions, such as heterosexual relations and celebrity endorsement. These types of advertisements could also be minimalist in nature to connote ideas of upper-class taste. Examples of these types of advertisements are shown below.



(d)



(e)



(f)

Advertisement (d) is relying on cultural conventions to convey meaning and promote the product. The dominant image shows a smiling woman (actress Scarlet Johansson) in the arms of a man. By applying their understanding of cultural norms the consumer is likely to identify that the young couple are in a romantic relationship. Advertisement (e) is promoting an exclusive brand through the use of a well known model (Gisele Bündchen). Lastly, advertisement (f) has taken a minimalist approach, highlighting a woman's face and the product itself. The colour combination of gold, deep red and black hints at an up-market expensive product that would appeal to achievers, as would the branding in advertisement (e).

#### **4.4.3 Summary**

This section explained some of the types of women that are likely to have read the magazine titles analysed in Part I. It is interesting to note that a large amount of advertising is aimed at the youngest and middle demographics, from 18 to 34 years. Many of these advertised products were for cosmetics and fragrance. The above analysis showed that an almost set formula is applied to construct these types of advertisements. This construct largely consists of semiotics which is used to convey both conventional and abstract ideologies in the images.



## 4.5 Limitations and Solutions

---

This section describes the limitations encountered in the second part of this research and proposes solutions that could limit their effect in future studies.

### 4.5.1 Surveys

Surveys played a fundamental role in this research; however certain aspects proved problematic. Indeed, limitations will always be encountered in social research.

The number of survey questions had to be kept to a minimum to entice respondents' voluntary participation. The brevity of the survey limited the scope of information that could be gained from the respondents, although the information gained was probably sufficient for a research project of this size.

The survey was prone to subjectivity due to the provocative nature of the research. The survey was formatted in a manner that attempted to conceal the intent of the survey - it could have easily been perceived to have been a marketing style survey. However, due to the nature of the subject the questions could be considered to be leading questions. This will always be an issue with research that is designed to measure personal perception.

On-line surveys were chosen to speed up the distribution and data collation, however this introduced additional limitations.

To partake in the survey, respondents had to be female and aged over 18 years of age. Using anonymous online submission there was no way to be sure that all of the respondents derived from this desired demographic. This was perhaps the biggest limitation of using on-line surveys. For example, males could have submitted surveys skewing the results. There is no way of measuring this.

The online nature also meant computer access and knowledge would have limited survey participation and sample diversity. In today's electronic age, society is divided into the information haves and the information have-nots (Norris 1999: 73). Therefore, only certain types of individuals would have been presented with the survey and been able to respond. This is classified as the 'digital divide' a 'useful shorthand term for the persistent inequalities that exist between the info-rich and the info-poor' (Chadwick 2006:

49) and is prevalent even in industrial nations like New Zealand. Due to these types of barriers, it is assumed that only middle to upper socio-economic, educated and professional working people or students participated in the survey. This is a logical assumption, because the initial set of e-mails that were sent out to start the survey process were all sent to the researcher's female friends and colleagues who all derive from this demographic. However, many professionals may not have participated in the survey because it was presented as a 'forward' e-mail message and may therefore have been perceived as a waste of time – as many forwards are – and deleted without a second thought or glance.

### **4.5.2 Sampling**

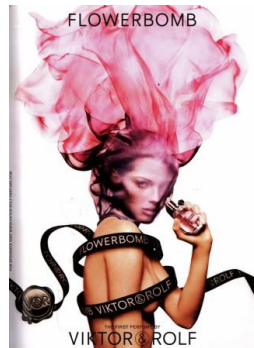
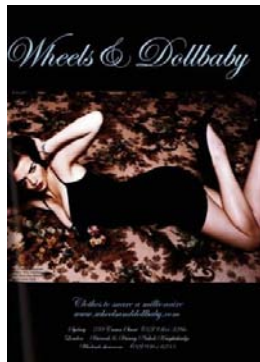
In the analysis of question 6(b) seven categories of comments from respondents were listed in the form of a content analysis. This analysis can be problematic because not all of the comments are included. Relevance sampling was undertaken and this resulted in some comments being analysed and others not. The choice of comments was determined by the researcher to fit into the desired categories and care had to be taken to ensure this did not result in a biased analysis.

In future research, some of the bias could be removed by creating enough categories to include all of the comments, while ensuring that the subject area remains the focus and the analysis is not distorted through the inclusion of irrelevant data. This will always be a limitation when undertaking content analysis and using qualitative data.

### 4.5.3 Advertisement Size

To ensure quick downloading of the survey the advertisements had to be kept to a small size. This is a limitation – especially when looking at the degrees of sexuality – because generally the larger an image the more provocative it is because small details can be seen.

Below are three examples of images that are the same size as those that were inserted into the surveys. The following pages show these same images at full page size. They appear far more sexual than their smaller versions because their larger size reveals the sexual details that are normally hidden in smaller images.



9.37 PM

11.05 PM

1.38 AM

3.55 AM

5.12 AM

7.29 AM

8.22 AM

11.33 AM

**durex**  
extended  
pleasure<sup>®</sup>  
saturn

**Extend her pleasure.**  
A special lubricant within the condom delays  
climax and extends her pleasure.

**durex**<sup>®</sup>  
It's all about great sex.



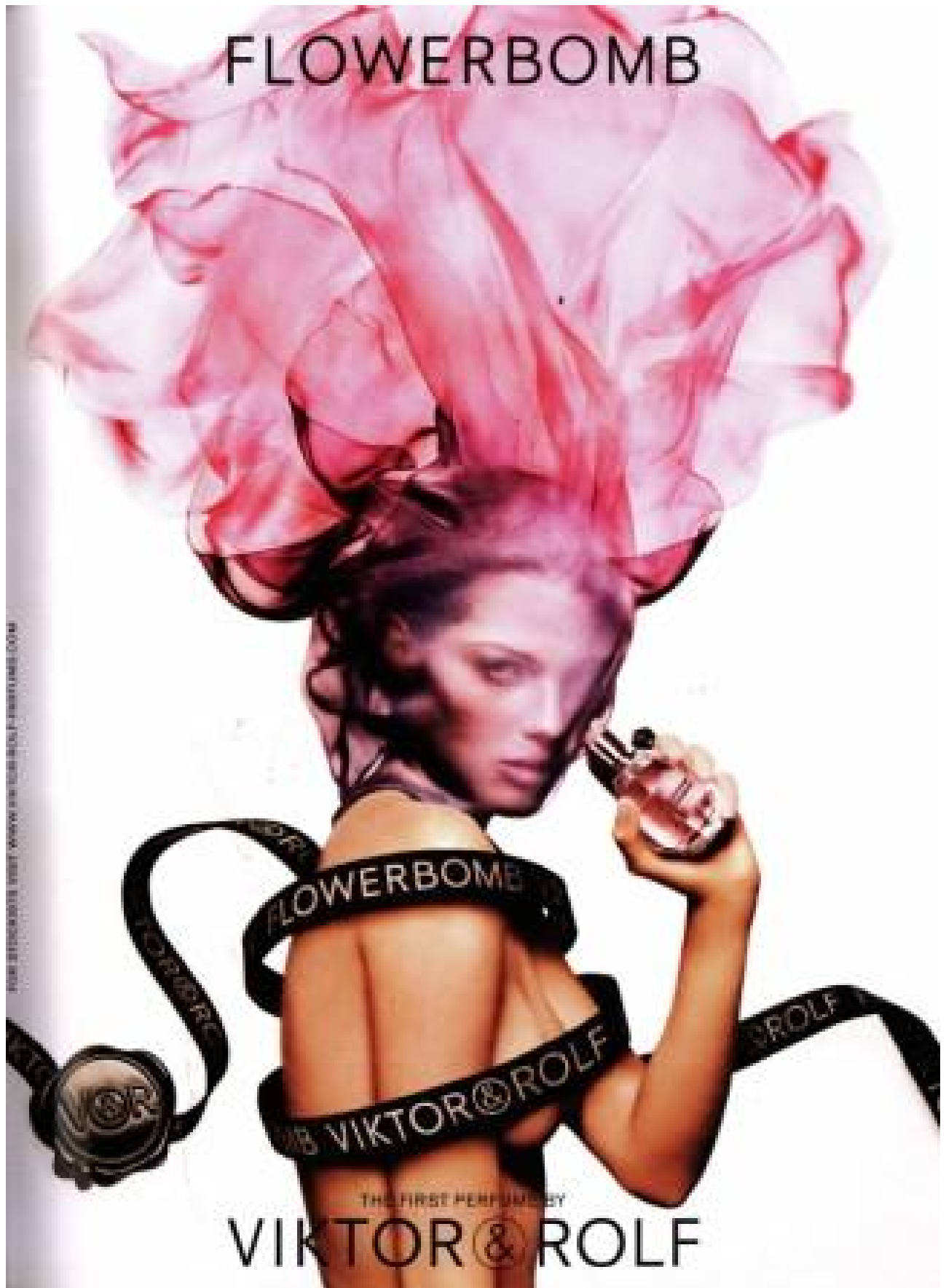
# *Wheels & Dollbaby*



phot: melanie greensmith  
styling: tony notarberardi  
makeup: brad ngata hair directions  
props: liz ketch DLM

*Clothes to snare a millionaire*  
[www.wheelsanddollbaby.com](http://www.wheelsanddollbaby.com)

Sydney – 259 Crown Street (02) 9361 3286  
London – Harrods & Harvey Nichols Knightsbridge  
Wholesale Showroom – (02) 9361 6255





## **5 Conclusion**



This study has determined that nearly every women's magazine advertisement analysed used sex for a number of reasons:

- As a promotional tool to differentiate products;
- To bring attention to products;
- It is a 'tried and true' formula that reaps financial reward for advertisers.

Ultimately, advertisers use sex to entice, attract and shock consumers into noticing the advertisement, although to shock nowadays advertisers really have to push the boundaries to the extreme because, as this analysis has found, sex is used so frequently that it is a common aspect in contemporary advertising. This frequency has meant that sexual boundaries have been re-visited time and again because what was once considered by society as obscene or objectionable is now considered the norm by advertisers and in turn, to a degree, by society. Therefore, this study has found that the use of sex in advertising continues and even flourishes with little likelihood of diminishing.

'Parents, pressure groups, and lawmakers soundly criticise the media for their portrayals of sex. Yet the outlets for and the diversity of sexual fare continue to grow along with the toleration of sexual imagery. We love our media sex, and we hate it, too' (Sapolsky cited in Reichert and Carpenter 2004: 826).

This study has found that, arguably, our 'love' of media sex far out weighs our 'hate' for it, at least in the realms of women's magazines, where sexualised images of women's bodies occur so frequently that they can be deemed as common, almost as the norm.

In Part I, the demographic analysis, it was found that:

- Overall, sex was used as key tool in the majority of the advertisements and across the age demographics.
- The magazines targeted at the youngest age demographic used the highest degree of sexuality in their advertising. In contrast, magazines for the oldest demographic were found to be the least sexual.

- The ‘fragrance’ product category was found to be the most sexual overall. Fragrance advertisements relied heavily on the use of the ‘promise’ – a tool commonly used by advertisers to promoting an idealised lifestyle.
- Some brands, most notably *Guess*, relied heavily on the use of sex throughout their entire campaign.
- Some of the images were so sexual in nature that they could not be properly measured on the coding schedule because it was not designed to measure such high degrees of sexuality. In particular, images showing women and men engaged in what could be considered sexual acts were unable to be effectively measured by the coding schedule. Such images were not anticipated to be contained in women’s magazines.
- A few of the images scored 0.0 on the coding schedule indicating that sex is not used in all advertisements. Advertisements without a hint of sex are deemed to be bland and non-memorable by the author.

From a historical standpoint Reichert identified that sex in advertisements ‘has worked, and does work, to inflame not only consumers’ libidos but their motivations and desires to make purchases’ (2003:9). Therefore, sex was applied to advertisements in the past just as it is today although now in a more accelerated pace and provocative manner.

During the advertisement encoding period in Part I of the analysis it was noted that some of the magazine titles – *Harper’s Bazaar*, *Glamour*, *Vogue*, and *Vanity Fair* – had a very high number of advertisements that all featured above-average to high degrees of sexuality. It was a surreal experience to flick through some of these titles and encounter full-page images of sexualised women one after the other. These images were strikingly similar: all the models were either wearing sexy clothing or were partially clad and posed in a sexual manner. The dominant theme that contributed to the high degrees of sexuality in the majority of these advertisements was the Facial Expression category – lips pouted in ‘come-hither’ expressions. The Feminine Touch category also contributed to this in a more subtle way, often adding a hint of sex to images where before there was none. The similarity of these images, as well as the limited shock value that they possess, shows that sex in advertising is used frequently.

This study found that advertisers have applied sex to women's bodies to such an extent that they have arguably run out of fresh ideas. In essence, it is the same image that was analysed time and again during the encoding of 5,198 advertisements. The idea of the tanned and toned-body, never-ending legs, enhanced busts, narrowed eyes and pouted lips, thin-waisted models sold the same sexualised idea over and over.

Rarely did advertisements feature images of older women, even in the publications aimed at the oldest demographic. The marginalisation of age was not the only aspect of women that was hidden from view. Natural body shapes and sizes were ignored for the most part – excluding the advertisements for *Dove*. Tall and thin models dominated the advertisements across all demographics. Rarely did the models' faces and skin tone reveal any hint of human imperfection, such dark circles under the eyes or acne. Instead, it appeared as though air-brushed and graphically modified images were used. In fact, throughout the entire analysis only a few portrayals of women were shown that deviated from the culturally established beauty ideals.

It appears that Part I of this study is essentially a mirror-image of previous studies cited in the literature review, although this study was undertaken on a much larger scale. For example, Linder (2004) examined 1,374 advertisements and found that from 1955 to 2002 very few changes were found in magazines portraying women. Reichert and Carpenter (2004) looked at the period from 1983 to 1993 and found that women not only continued to be portrayed in a sexual manner but that the degree of sexuality actually increased over time. This study involved an extensive analysis of 5,198 women's magazine advertisements from 2005 and 2006 and found that sex in advertising is a common aspect that occurs in the majority of advertisements. In essence, these results are strikingly similar to those of previous aforementioned studies, with research in this area now spanning over fifty years of advertising.

In Part II of the analysis, many survey respondents emotively commented on the sexualised and unrealistic depiction of women in magazine advertisements. Yet responses indicated that while women liked the idea of changing the portrayal of women in advertising they would prefer not to see the reality of the types of images that would result in the magazines they read.

Part II found that:

- Women were genuinely interested in the subject area. Four hundred and ninety-one volunteered their time and filled out an on-line questionnaire.
- Respondents were quite evenly divided across the three age demographics.
- Women are likely to be more influenced by magazine advertising than they realise.
- Women believe that 'average' women and women of all ages are under-represented in advertising
- The most recollected advertisements contained a 'promise' in a sexual context.
- Women rated a Calvin Klein Eternity Fragrance advertisement as the most sexual overall. The sexualised image showed an intimate heterosexual relationship between a man and a woman.

Many women took the survey as an opportunity to express their opposition to the sexual way women are depicted in advertising. Many of the comments were quite hostile towards the use of sex in advertising and applauded the use of 'real' and older women, such as those shown in the *Dove* campaign. However, few of the comments suggested practical alternatives to the current representation of women's bodies or methods of promoting products.

Women's magazine advertisements are not a representation of real women. It is an impossibility for them to be so because the models used in advertisements 'are believed to be genetic freaks whose facial and bodily proportions are well designed to excite and please' (Etcoff 2000:179). This, paired with computer graphics further ensures the advertisements are an unrealistic portrayal of women. This analysis has determined that advertisements are not attempting to represent normal women and perhaps have never aimed to represent the 'average' woman reader. Advertising functions as a 'form of fantasy and escapism' (Brierly 1995:167) and not as a depiction of the real. The use of sex in advertising is so stylised and based on fantasy that it no longer represents realistic women.

Idealistic representations of sexy women in fancy life-style settings are one of the great appeals of women's fashion and general interest magazines. This analysis indicates that perhaps 'everyday' and 'average' in women's magazine advertising would not be as appealing as the 'idealistic'. It would not generate the same interest from consumers and therefore not generate the same profits. The advertising industry is aware that 'advertising is about appearances' (Barthel 1988: 1) an illusionary world far removed from the day-to-day humdrum of life. The use of sex in advertising attempts to evoke interest in even the most banal products through the countless portrayals of something that is natural and innately human.

The notions of sex and sexiness are used to push and promote much-valued cultural ideals and norms. Love, romance, intimacy, relationships, togetherness, and success are just some of the values that are expressed time and again through the use of sex in advertising. Advertisers are well aware that these values are cherished and are an inherent part of human social life and know that any hint of sex – however slight – will convey one or more of these values. Above all, sex is used to tie and inject values into products which in turn become value-laden and therefore more desirable for the consumer. The more desirable a product, the more profitable it is for advertisers.

As long as the intertwining of sex into advertising campaigns continue to generate profits the practice is likely to continue indefinitely. Currently, sex is used in nearly every single women's magazine advertisement in some form or other – through the use of attractive, thin women; finger nibbling; complete nudity; and the depiction of intimacy between a man and a woman. Sex will always be used in women's magazine advertising because it is inherent to the nature of advertising and, as Reichert found, has been applied since the 1800s. It is a successful tool that will continue to be used until a more successful advertising technique is found to replace it. Until then legions of young women will further be exposed to similar images that were analysed today and will always be inadvertently drawn into the sexualised idealistic world just like generations of women were before them. This attraction paired with profit will ensure the continuance of sex in women's magazine advertising. To not use sex in some form or other in advertising images is a sheer impossibility.

The portrayal of 'real', older and above all else, less sexualised images of women in future advertising looks unlikely.

In an analysis of the *Dove Campaign for Real Beauty* it was found that 73 percent of respondents indicated that they would like to see more 'average' looking models used in advertising (Patterson 2006). However, to date other companies have not utilised *Dove's* strategy. Advertising content is not likely to change until more companies decide to follow suit. Of course, this will only happen if, and when, they sense a possibility for profit. Otherwise why change a formula that has worked since the 1800's?

Further future research in this area will likely find women to be just as sexualised in advertising images five to ten years from now as they are today and probably even more so.

## 6 References

Achen, S. T. *Symbols Around Us*, United States of America: Litton Educational Publishing, 1978

ACP Media Australia Website, *Cosmopolitan Magazine Readership Statistics*, [www.acp.com.au](http://www.acp.com.au), Accessed: 22 June 2005.

ACP Media New Zealand Website, *Next Magazine Readership Statistics*, [www.acp.co.nz](http://www.acp.co.nz), Accessed: 22 June 2005.

Baran, S. J. *Introduction to Mass Communication: Media Literacy and Culture*, Mayfield Publishing, Mountain View Calif., 1999

Barthel, D. *Putting On Appearances: Gender and Advertising*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1988

Berelson, B. "Content Analysis" in Marris, P. and Thornham, S. (eds) *Media Studies: A Reader*, New York University Press, New York, 1952

Berger, A. *Ads, Fads, & Consumer Culture*, Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, Maryland, 2004

Berger, A. *Media & Society [A Critical Perspective]*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, USA, 2003

Berger, K. *The Developing Person: Through Childhood and Adolescence*, Worth Publishers, New York, 1980

Brierly, S. *The Advertising Handbook*, Routledge, London, 1995

Chadwick, A., *Internet Politics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006

Chen, M.Y.T., & Zhou, N., 'A content analysis of men and women in Canadian consumer magazine advertising: Today's portrayal, yesterday's image?' in *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 16, No. 5, 1997. pp., 485-496

Condé Nast Website, *Glamour Magazine Media Kit*, [www.condenastmediakit.com](http://www.condenastmediakit.com), Accessed: 1 April 2006

Cook, G. *The Discourse of Advertising*, Routledge, London, 1992



- Cooke, Kaz., *Real Gorgeous: The Truth about Body and Beauty*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards NSW, 1997
- Cortese, A. J. *Provocateur: Images of Women and Minorities in Advertising*, Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, Md, 1999
- Coupland, J. & Gwyn, R. *Discourse, the Body, and Identity*, Palgrave MacMillan, Hampshire, 2003, pp. 129-140
- Coward, R., *Female Desire: Women's Sexuality Today*, Paladin Books, London, 1984
- Cronin, A.M. *Advertising Myths: The Strange half Lives of Images and Commodities*, Routledge, New York, 2004
- Crowley, D., *Magazine Covers*, Octopus Publishing Group, Great Britain, 2003
- Davidson, M. *The Consumerist Manifesto*, Routledge, London, 1992
- De Saussure, F., *Course in General Linguistics*, McGraw-Hill Paperback, New York, 1959
- De Saussure, F., *Course in General Linguistics*, Open Court Publishing, Illinois, 1983
- Deacon, D. Pickering, M. Golding P. & Murdock, G., *Researching Communications: A Practical Guide to Methods in Media and Cultural Analysis*. Arnold, Great Britain, 1998
- Etcoff, N., *Survival of the Prettiest: The Science of Beauty*, Abacus Books, London, 2000
- Goffman, E. *Gender Advertisements*, Harper and Row, New York, 1979
- Goffman, E., *Forms of Talk*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1981
- Gorman, F. E., *Advertising Images of Females in Seventeen: Positions of Power or Powerless Positions*, Media Report to Women, Winter 2005
- Gripsrud, J., *Understanding Media Culture*, Arnold, Great Britain, 2002
- Hardy, M., 'Summarizing Distributions' in Melissa Hardy & Alan Bryman (eds) *Handbook of Data Analysis*, SAGE Publications, London, 2004, pp. 35-64

Haug, F., et al. *Female Sexualization: A Collective Work of Memory*, Verso, London, 1999

Hearst/ACP, *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, Issues Feb – July 2005, Sydney

Hefner, H.M., *Playboy The Celebrities*, Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 2006

Jamieson, S., 'Likert Scales: How to (ab)use them' in *Medical Education*, Vol. 38 No. 12, December 2004

Jhally, S. *Critical Studies in Media Commercialism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000

Jhally, S. *The Codes of Advertising: Fetishism and the Political Economy of Meaning in the Consumer Society*. Routledge, London, 1990

Kang, M., *The portrayal of women's images in magazine advertisements: Goffman's gender analysis revisited*, Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, Vol 37, Nos 11-12, 1997

Kilbourne, J., *Deadly Persuasion: Why Women and Girls Must Fight the Addictive Power of Advertising*, Touchstone, New York, 1999

Kilbourne, J., *Gender, Race and Class*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, 1995

Krippendorff, K., *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*, Sage Publications, California, 2004

Krum, S., 'Role Model', *The Australian Women's Weekly NZ Edition*, April 2005

Lee, M., *Fashion Victim: Our love-hate relationship with dressing, shopping and the cost of style*, Broadway Books, New York, 2003

Linder, K., *Images of Women in General Interest and Fashion Magazine Advertisements from 1955 to 2002*, Sex Roles, Vol 51, Nos 7-8, October 2004.

Luhmann, N., *The Reality of the Mass Media*, Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishers, Cambridge, 2000

Masters, J., 'Buying Beauty: the Hollywood name game', *She*, July 2005

McCracken E., *Decoding Women's Magazines: From Mademoiselle to Ms.*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1993

McQuail, D., *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*, (4<sup>th</sup> ed), Sage Publications, London, 2000

Neff, J., *In Dove Ads, Normal is the New Beautiful*, in MARKETING, C.S.I.N.O. Advertising Age, 2004

Newman, J., 'The Joy of Being Julianne', *The Australian Women's Weekly*, October 2006

New Zealand Herald, *Horny lingerie ad grounded by Auckland airport*, 18 Jan 2007

Norris, P., 'Who Surfs: New Technology, Old Voters and Virtual Democracy' in Kamarck, Elaine Ciulla and Joseph S. Nye (eds) *democracy.com? Governance in a Networked World*, Hollis, NH Hollis, 1999, pp. 71-94

Octopus Books Ltd, *The Oxford Combined Dictionary*, Chancellor Press, London, 1987

Patterson, E., *Dove 'Campaign for Real Beauty'*, Honours Paper, University of Canterbury, 2006

Pedersen, S., *Bra: A Thousand Years of Style, Support and Seduction*, David & Charles Publications, UK, 2004

Phillips, M.J. *Ethics and Manipulation in Advertising: Answering a Flawed Indictment*, Quorum Books, 1997

Poe, A. *Active Women in Ads*, Journal of Communication, Sept 1976, pp. 85-92.

Reichert, T., Carpenter, C., *An Update on Sex in Magazine Advertising: 1983 to 2003*, Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, Vol 81, No. 4, 2004

Reichert, T., *The Erotic History of Advertising*, Prometheus Books, USA, 2003

Reichert, T., *The prevalence of sexual imagery in ads targeted to young adults*, Journal of Consumer Affairs 37.2 (Winter 2003), 2003.

Richardson, J., 'Wrinklies Just Wanna have Fun!' in Alison Shaw and John Richardson (eds) *The Body in Qualitative Research*, Ashgate Publishing, England, 1998, pp. 143-157

Root, J., *Pictures of Women: Sexuality*, Pandora Press, London, 1984

Saad, G. *Applying Evolutionary Psychology in Understanding the Representation of Women in Advertisements* in *Psychology & Marketing*, Hoboken: Aug 2004, Vol 21, Issue 8, p 593

Schudson, M., 'What Advertising Agencies Know' in *Advertising: The Uneasy Persuasion*, Routledge, London, 1993

Tebbel, C., *The Body Snatchers: How the Media Shapes Women*, Finch Publishing, New South Wales, 2000

Turner, S., 'Inside Advertising Culture' in Luke Goode and Nabeel Zuberi (eds) *Media Studies in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, Pearson Education Publishing, Auckland, 2004, pp. 170-181

Wilson, J.S., *The Effect of Women's Magazines on Women's Body Satisfaction*, Masters Thesis, University of Canterbury, 1995

## Magazines

<b>Title</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Publisher</b>
Cleo	Jan – Dec 2005	ACP Media, Auckland
Cosmopolitan	Jan – Dec 2005	Hearst/ACP Media, Sydney
She	Feb, Mar, Jun-Dec 2005 Jan, Apr, May 2006	Hearst/ACP Media, Sydney
Harper's Baazar	May, Sept-Dec 2005 Jan/Feb, Mar, Apr, Jun-Aug 2006	Hearst/ACP Media, Sydney
New Woman	Jan-Dec 2005	Emap Australia, Sydney
Marie Claire	Jan, Mar, Apr, Jun-Dec 2005 Feb, May 2006	Pacific Magazines, Sydney
Vogue	Jan, Feb, Apr-Dec 2005 Mar 2006	FPC Magazines, Alexandra, Australia
Glamour	Jan-Apr, Sept-Dec 2005 May-Aug 2006	Condé Nast Publications, London
Vanity Fair	Jan, Jul, Dec 2005 Feb-Jun, Aug-Nov 2006	Condé Nast Publications, London
Next Magazine	Jan – Dec 2005	ACP Media, Auckland
Australian Woman's Weekly (NZ Edition)	Jan – Dec 2005	ACP Media, Auckland
O, the Oprah Magazine	May, Oct, Dec 2005 Jan-Apr, Jun-Sept, Nov 2006	Hearst Communications, Inc, New York

## 7 Appendices

## Appendix A – Encoding Example

Below is an example of one of the 141 encoding spread-sheets used to record the degree of sexuality in the advertisement analysed in Part I of the research. This example is the sheet used to record data for the April 2005 issue of Next magazine.

Input data				Combined results												Total									
Product/brand	Category	Celeb?	Page	L/R/D/I	Colour	Pose	Sexual acts	Action/still	Facial expression	Clothing/shoes	Nakedness	Fragmentation	Text	Setting/props	Feminine Touch	Colour/text	Pose/sexual pose	Action/still	Facial expression	Clothing/shoes	Nakedness	Fragmentation	Setting/props	Feminine Touch	
Totals																									
Estee lauder - Ideal matte	Beauty	No	1 D		2	8	0	10	3	4	6	2	0	1	5	2	8	10	3	4	6	2	1	5	46
Lancome Juicy wear Duo	Beauty	No	3 D		10	0	0	5	5	0	0	10	4	10	0	10	0	5	5	0	0	10	10	0	44
Lancome - Color ID	Beauty	Yes	5 D		3	0	0	10	5	0	5	9	0	0	0	3	0	10	5	0	5	9	0	0	36
revlon - Colorstay Overtime sheer Color	Beauty	Yes	7 D		7	0	0	10	1	9	7	5	4	1	0	10	0	10	1	9	7	5	1	0	48
Dior - Capture Sculpt 10	Personal	No	12 L		3	5	0	10	10	0	10	9	0	0	9	3	5	10	0	10	9	0	9	0	62
clairms - Multi active serum	Personal	No	17 R		3	5	0	10	4	0	0	6	0	0	4	3	5	10	4	0	0	6	0	4	36
Chanel - Coco Mademoiselle	Fragrance	Yes	21 R		4	9	0	10	10	0	10	5	1	1	5	5	9	10	0	10	5	1	5	61	
Olaj total Effects (on couch)	Personal	No	41 R		0	5	0	10	0	0	0	3	0	4	1	0	5	10	0	0	0	3	4	1	26
L'Oreal Sublime Bronze (standing up)	Personal	No	47 R		5	10	0	10	7	10	9	1	0	4	1	5	10	10	7	10	9	1	4	1	63
PPS - fuse for colored hair range	Hair Care	No	49 R		6	7	0	10	10	7	3	6	0	0	0	6	7	10	10	7	3	6	0	0	54
Garnier - ant dandruff shampoo	Hair Care	No	59 R		0	7	5	5	3	0	0	7	0	0	4	0	10	5	3	0	0	7	0	4	32
Ainwick	Household	No	70 L		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	04
Environ	Personal	No	73 R		3	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	14
Avon - Lip Miracle	Beauty	Yes	74 D		7	6	0	10	8	5	4	5	0	1	0	7	6	10	8	5	4	5	1	0	51
L'Oreal - cashmire perfect	Beauty	Yes	76 D		4	5	0	10	9	0	10	9	0	1	6	4	5	10	9	0	10	9	1	6	60
Purina One - 30 Day (dog food)	Household	Yes	94 D		5	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
Active Intent	Shoes/Clo	No	97 R		0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	11
Goldwell	Hair Care	No	102 D		2	0	0	5	10	5	3	0	0	5	0	2	0	5	10	5	3	0	5	0	33
Godwell Intense	Hair Care	No	105 R		0	7	0	10	4	0	0	4	0	5	0	0	7	10	4	0	0	4	5	0	33
Sotrys 2005	Beauty	No	121 R		5	8	7	1	10	0	10	6	0	0	0	5	10	1	10	0	10	6	0	0	47
Caprice Intimates	Shoes/Clo	No	125 R		5	7	0	10	5	10	9	3	1	0	2	6	7	10	5	10	9	3	0	2	58
Veet Rasera	Personal	No	137 R		3	5	0	7	0	10	10	1	5	2	4	5	7	0	0	10	10	5	2	48	
Atlantis Bathroom Style	Household	No	148 L		0	9	0	10	4	0	10	7	0	10	3	0	9	10	4	0	10	7	10	3	59
Freya	Shoes/Clo	No	154 R		5	10	1	10	4	10	9	1	1	9	3	6	10	10	4	10	9	1	9	3	69
Joyce Blok	Personal	No	158 L		0	5	0	10	4	0	10	6	0	0	0	0	0	5	4	0	10	6	0	0	39
Beriel	Shoes/Clo	No	167 R		5	8	0	9	1	10	9	4	4	1	4	9	8	9	1	10	9	4	1	4	61
schick Intuition	Personal	No	175 R		3	0	0	5	0	0	10	10	1	10	4	4	0	5	0	0	10	10	10	4	48
Galaxy (with headphones)	Household	No	180 D		2	6	0	10	3	0	10	7	0	9	0	2	6	10	3	0	10	7	9	0	52
Dilmah Moroccan Mint Tea	Household	No	182 L		0	0	0	5	4	0	0	5	0	0	1	0	0	5	4	0	0	5	0	1	17
Fantastic Soho's Crackers	Household	No	202 L		2	4	0	10	0	0	0	2	0	5	1	2	4	10	0	0	0	2	5	1	27
Kumfi's	Shoes/Clo	No	225 R		0	0	0	0	0	5	4	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5	4	5	0	1	17
revlon - Colorstay Overtime sheer Color	Beauty	Yes	228 B		5	0	0	10	1	0	4	6	4	1	0	9	0	10	1	0	4	6	1	0	34
Category Totals			Count																						
Beauty			8																						46
Hair Care			4																						38
Fragrance			1																						61
Personal			8																						42
Shoes/Clothing			5																						43
Household			6																						29
Other			0																						00
Totals			32																						

## Appendix B – Online Survey and Automated Responses

---

The following pages have been printed from the website, [www.magazinesurvey.co.nz](http://www.magazinesurvey.co.nz), which was created in Part II of this research.

There are three sections:

- The *welcome page*, which respondents saw when entering [www.magazinesurvey.co.nz](http://www.magazinesurvey.co.nz) into their web browser,
- The *survey page* itself where the questions were asked, and
- The *thank you page*, displayed after the survey had been submitted.

Also included is an example of one of the 491 automated e-mail responses received.



## Research Survey

The following survey is a study of womens' responses to advertising in women's monthly magazines conducted by Ilona Pawlowski at the University of Canterbury. It is part of an MA thesis in Mass Communication and should only take a few minutes to complete. The responses to this survey will be kept completely confidential and anonymous, and the collected data will be used for research purposes only.

There are 14 survey questions in total. Thank you for your time and participation!

Please only complete this survey if you are female, and over 18 years of age.

[Click here to start the survey!](#)

Please be patient - it might take a while to load if you have a slow Internet connection...

If you have any questions about this survey, please contact me:

Ilona Pawlowski via email: [ilona@magazinesurvey.co.nz](mailto:ilona@magazinesurvey.co.nz)

Or you can contact my thesis supervisor:

Jim Tully, Head of School, Political Science and Communication at the University of Canterbury.


## Survey Questions

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey - it will only take a few minutes!

**1. Please indicate your age**

- ☐ 18 - 24 years
- ☐ 25 - 34 years
- ☐ 35 - 55 years
- ☐ 56 years or older

**2. Where do you live?**

(choose one) 

**3. Please tick the box below beside each magazine title that you have read in the past twelve months.  
(Tick all that apply)**

- ☐ Cosmopolitan
- ☐ Cleo
- ☐ She
- ☐ Harper's Bazaar
- ☐ New Woman
- ☐ Marie Claire
- ☐ Vogue
- ☐ Glamour
- ☐ O The Oprah Magazine
- ☐ Vanity Fair
- ☐ Next
- ☐ The Australian Womens' Weekly

**4. Please estimate how often you read or flick through any of the magazines listed above.**

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Fortnightly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Every two months
- ☐ Never

**5. How would you describe your magazine use? (Check the option that applies most to you)**

- ☐ Subscribe
- ☐ Buy
- ☐ Flick through at the news stand without buying
- ☐ Flick through at the hairdresser's/dentist's/doctor's waiting areas
- ☐ Borrow a friend's
- ☐ Read online

**6a. Please estimate how many products you have purchased based on an advertisement you saw in a magazine over the last month. (This could be anything from body lotions, sanitary products, make-up, perfume to washing machines and cars etc.)**

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1 - 2 products
- ☐ 3 - 4 products
- ☐ 4 or more

**6b. If you purchased a product, what do you remember the most from the advertisement or advertisements?**

**For the next set of questions, choose the answer that best describes how you feel about the statement.**

**7. Advertising increases my expenditure.**

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

**8. Advertising influences my product purchases.**

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

**9. Celebrity endorsed advertisements influence my product purchases.**

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

**10. Advertising in women's magazines is representative of 'average' women.**

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

**11. Advertising in women's magazines represents women of all ages.**

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

The following advertisements are examples of those found in Women's magazines and are used in this research. Please take a moment to look at them, then answer questions below.



Guess eyewear



Ralph Lauren Romance Fragrance



Revlon Age Defying make-up



L'Oreal Nutri Soft 24 Hr Moisturiser



Watersun swimwear



Dove Firming Lotion Moisturiser

**12. Considering all six advertisements above, overall, I think the women pictured are represented in a sexual way.**

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

**13. I think the women pictured are represented in a sexual way appropriate to the product being advertised.**

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

The final question refers to the following images - please take a moment to look at them then answer the final question below...



Image A



Image B



Image C



Image D

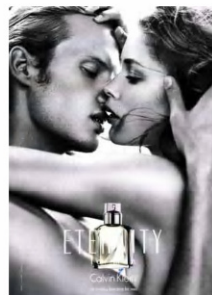


Image E



Image F

**14. Please rate the images above in order from most 'sexual' to least 'sexual'.**

Do this by placing a number in the box below each image.

For instance, if you think image C is most sexual, type '1' in the box below Image C.

If you think image A is second most sexual, type '2' in the box below Image A, and so on

That's it! Thanks for participating. If you have any comments about this research then please write them below.

[Click here to submit the Survey!](#)

**Thank you for participating in the survey!!**



Please ask as many other women as you can to participate!

The website address for the survey is [www.magazinesurvey.co.nz](http://www.magazinesurvey.co.nz)

[Click here for someone else to take the survey right now!!](http://www.magazinesurvey.co.nz)

## Example of automated response

**From:** (Unknown Email) 132.181.7.1  
**Date:** Wednesday, 29 November 2006 2:19pm  
**To:** [form@magazinesurvey.co.nz](mailto:form@magazinesurvey.co.nz)  
**Subject:** Survey Form

\_1: 18-24  
\_2: Christchurch  
\_3: Cosmo  
\_3: Cleo  
\_3: Next  
\_3: AWW  
\_4: Fortnightly  
\_5: Waiting\_room  
\_6a: None  
\_6b:

If I did, it would be the colour, the sex appeal  
of the woman sporting the product- hence it would  
make me feel sexy to use and any recommendations from  
celebrities I admire

\_7: D  
\_8: A  
\_9: N  
\_10: SD  
\_11: D  
\_12: SA  
\_13: D  
A: 2  
B: 4  
C: 6  
D: 5  
E: 1  
F: 3  
Comments:

I am always most put off by Guess ads. They ooze  
way too much sexuality for what they are advertising.  
But sex at such a level I don't believe the average  
reader could really relate to or even aspire to. Some of  
the models are so sickeningly gaunt or else the males  
looks reek of femininity. I cannot look at a guess ad and  
feel connected in anyway, it makes me feel like i'm not  
one of the glamorous crowd and rubs it in my face as  
if to say you never could be one of our elitist  
league. What a paradox when the point of advertising is to  
appeal the targeted consumer of the magazine. Is that  
consumer someone that looks like sex on a stick and has a  
wallet to buy Guess watches or underwear? What then is  
the real message behind the bling? Are we trying to  
separate economic classes of women through advertising, not  
only make them feel inadequate about their body image  
but also about their pockets implying that it takes an  
expensive product to make a women beautiful! You don't got  
the doe, you don't get the mojo my friend.

-----  
HTTP Referer: <http://www.magazinesurvey.co.nz/surveypage.htm>  
HTTP User Agent: Mozilla/4.0 (compatible; MSIE 6.0; Windows NT 5.1; SV1; InfoPath.1)  
Remote Host: